15th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The Washington Monthly

FEBRUARY 1984/$2

Our underworked Air Force

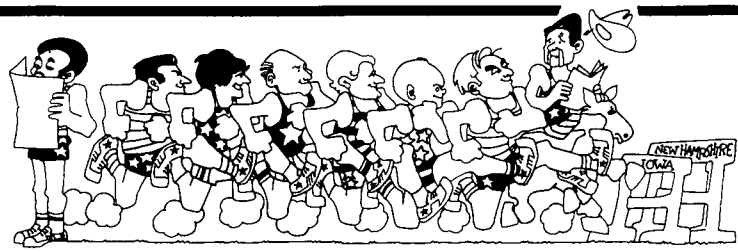
The vanity of the sixties generation

MURDER BY DEPORTATION

Salvadorans Held at Federal Detention Centers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICAL PROFILES



SPECIAL '84 ELECTION SERIES

Keep Track of the Candidates' Track Records

READ POLITICAL PROFILES

NON PARTISAN BOOKS ON THE CANDIDATES

PRESIDENTIAL PROFILES

★ GLENN
★ REAGAN
★ MONDALE

Al Hunt, Bob Shogan, Fred Barnes, Jon Margolis, Finlay Lewis and other top political reporters tell you everything you need to know about the candidates in one convenient publication. Our 32-page profiles feature exclusive interviews with the candidate and his family, comprehensive political and personal biographies, issue stances on over 100 current topics, key staffers and much, much more. Available January 1984.

CONVENTION ISSUES SERIES

Political Profiles publishes the perfect guide for the 1984 Democratic and Republican national conventions to be held in San Francisco and Dallas in the summer of 1984. Convention profiles will list all of the convention events inside and outside of the convention hall. Interviews with presidential candidates and leading vice-presidential contenders; general election outlook and analysis of Senate and House races. Available May 1984.

PPI REPORT

★ *Politics, People and Issues.*

For those of you who want up-to-the-minute information on the '84 elections, Political Profiles has a proven track record. For five years we have set the pace in providing our readers with a fresh new approach to political reporting in our highly respected bi-weekly **PPI Report.** Here's what we offer:

- **In-depth interviews in every issue**
- **Updates along the campaign trail**
- **Polls**
- **Fundraising and much more!**

NEW ADMINISTRATION PROFILES

Available January, 1985 we will feature in-depth interviews with the new influential people at the White House. We will present job descriptions and complete biographical information on more than 100 top staffers, and look behind the titles to let you know who really wields the power in the new administration.

ORDER FORM **$3.00 each profile; indicate quantity desired beside each profile**

	Quantity	Amount
PRESIDENTIAL PROFILES		
• Glenn	_____	
• Mondale	_____	
• Reagan	_____	
CONVENTION PROFILES		
• Democratic	_____	
• Republican	_____	
NEW ADMINISTRATION ISSUE	_____	
Total Profiles @ $3.00 each	_____	_____
All 6 Profiles plus postage @ $21.60/set	_____	_____
Postage & Handling, 60¢ per profile		_____
D.C. residents, add 6% sales tax		_____
Total Amount Due		_____

SPECIAL BONUS OFFER. Order PPI Report now and receive **FREE** our Special '84 Election Series—24 PPI Reports a year plus 6 special election profiles. **Now only $125.00.**

☐ **Yes,** I want to take advantage of this money-saving offer. Send me 24 issues of the PPI Report and 6 special election profiles for only **$125.00** for the entire package.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State_____ Zip_____

Please include check or money order payable to Political Profiles, Inc. Mail to:

Political Profiles, Inc.
209 C Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In 1977, We Told You Ford Pintos Had A Problem.

In 1980, We Told You That America Had A Problem.

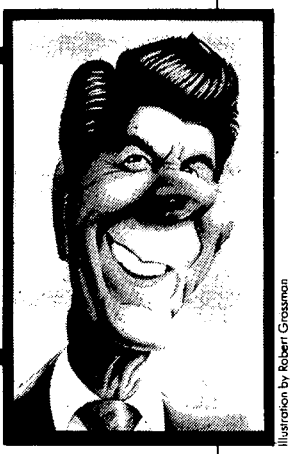


Illustration by Robert Grossman

Two stories couldn't be more different: In 1977, our story on the Ford Pinto uncovered a history of corporate irresponsibility. In 1980, our story on candidate Ronald Reagan accurately predicted the State of the Union a year in advance.

The Pinto story was investigative reporting at its most persistent and probing. The Reagan story was political coverage at its most provocative.

But the two stories do have at least one thing in common. They both appeared first in the pages of *Mother Jones*.

This mix of documentary-style exposé and wide-ranging commentary makes us unique on the U.S. scene. So do our on-the-spot reports and photo essays from the front-lines of social upheaval.

Mother Jones has won more than its share of editorial awards in the past six years.

But we refuse to rest on our laurels.

We were covering the vicious war in El Salvador 20 months before it hit the nation's front pages.

We've been called "one of the most engaging, uncompromising and nervy publications in America." But that doesn't surprise us either.

We never treat official opinion as Holy Writ. We don't butter up celebrities for a glimpse at their kitchen decor. We don't think politics or health issues or nuclear weapons are fads.

We take our job as journalists more seriously than that. And we extend the same respect to our 640,000 readers.

Which may be why, in a recent survey, they called *Mother Jones* "more informative," "more stimulating" and "more to-the-point" than any other magazine they depend on for news, information and opinion.

If you're not a reader yet, you should be. When you subscribe, we'll send you—*absolutely free*—**Poor Ronald's Almanac: Hard Facts for Hard Times.** This 64-page sourcebook is certain to start arguments as well as settle them.

Do it now.

Because we hate to point to a fiery wreck or a shattered economy and years later say we told you so.

Read *Mother Jones* and you'll be the first to know.

Poor Ronald's Almanac & *Mother Jones* Risk-Free

Please enter a one-year (10 issues) subscription in my name and bill me for $12—33% off the regular subscription price. Also send my *free* copy of *Poor Ronald's Almanac*. If I'm ever dissatisfied, for any reason, you'll refund my subscription for all unmailed copies.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Add $3 for delivery to Canada, and $4 for delivery to other countries.

Mother Jones, 1886 Haymarket Square, Marion, OH 43305

DAWMPP

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Get Me Rewrite

In December's "Tilting at Windmills," there is the statement that the first film version of *The Front Page* starred Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell. Uh-uh! That was the second. The first one was in 1930 starring Adolph Menjou.

HERMAN GORDON
Washington, D.C.

Unfriendly Skies

Your December article on the dangers resulting from airline deregulation ["Cheap Seats and White Knuckles," Robert M. Kaus] reminded me of a story a friend who was employed by the U.S. Public Health Service told me some years ago. "You know," he said, "there was a manufacturer who intended to market an infant's teething ring that he had painted with radium paint so the infant could see it in the dark. We had absolutely no legal way by which we could prevent him from doing this, so what we did was to take out ads in all the media telling people they were free to buy the rings, but if used, the rings would probably kill their babies. The rings were taken off the market."

I wonder what the result would be if the FAA or, better still, a private insuring agency, took out ads in all the media to the effect that:

ABC Airline
Does Not Use Safe Maintenance Procedures.
Travel With Them
At Your Own Risk.

XYZ Airline
Denies Safety Inspectors Permission
To Monitor Their Maintenance Procedures.
Travel With Them
At Your Own Risk.

BOB FAUVRE
Eugene, Oregon

Any author must appreciate a review that is generally favorable, but in his look at my *Rebuilding America: The Case for Economic Regulation*, Robert M. Kaus grossly misstates my overall position on airline regulation.

I have indeed "been a somewhat lonely voice over the past decade" in criticizing the movement toward economic deregulation in a number of industries, but one reason is that I have definitely *not* been "waxing nostalgic about the glory days of CAB-type cartels." I have argued all along that the CAB regulatory system was indeed wasteful, inefficient, and otherwise faulty, even if it was a little better than what we have now. In this context, the book attempts to make at least these two points:

—Economic regulation need not necessarily involve an overhead public agency, and I give a number of examples in support of this argument, one of them being the recent agreement among players and owners to "regulate" the National Basketball Association.

—With respect to public transportation, *any* head-to-head competition is inherently wasteful and inefficient. The airline problem all along was *too much competition,* not too little, so that the decision to greatly increase competition (excessive duplication of service and capacity) only made this problem worse—by vastly increasing the number of empty seats and virtually compelling airlines to cut corners.

Devising suitable regulatory schemes for many industries, perhaps on a global basis, cannot be an easy task, but "Mussolini-type" schemes are not really necessary. The first step, however, is to acknowledge that the "efficiency" of free markets is a myth that cannot withstand analysis.

FREDERICK C. THAYER
Washington, D.C.

In "Cheap Seats and White Knuckles," Robert M. Kaus argues that economic deregulation of the airlines in 1978 has made flying more dangerous. In support of this he points out that air carrier fatalities averaged less than 80 a year during the 1975-77 period and 150 a year for 1978-82. These figures prove nothing of the kind; nor do they prove anything at all.

Airline fatalities, by their nature, come in bunches. One big bunch that Kaus throws into the post-deregulation (i.e., "white knuckles") period was the San Diego mid-air collision of September 25, 1978, in which 144 persons died. Unfortunately for his thesis, this was a month before deregulation became law.

In the years when deregulation actually could have been a factor, there have been four big bunches. One was in Mexico City (73 dead), where a Western Airlines pilot landed his plane on a closed runway. Another was in New Orleans, where 153 died when a Pan American plane was downed by windshear—a meteorological phenomenon which is still imperfectly understood. Mr. Kaus does not suggest that either of these crashes was linked to economic deregulation of the airlines.

But it is another matter in the Washington crash of an Air Florida jet (78 dead) and the crash of an American Airlines plane in Chicago (273 killed). Mr. Kaus writes that "cost-cutting was. . .a factor" in the Washington disaster, because Air Florida pilots "had been trained to avoid using full power on takeoff in order to economize on fuel." If this was a factor, it escaped the attention of the National Transportation Safety Board, which didn't raise the question in its 137-page report on the crash. What *was* a factor was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the plane had less power than its instruments showed, due to ice in a sensing device.

Of the Chicago crash, Mr. Kaus writes, "In 1979, Thayer reminds us, American Airlines decided to save some money in the inspection of the engines on its DC-10s." This new inspection procedure was indeed a factor in the accident—but American Airlines began using it not in 1979, but in mid-1977. Inconveniently for the Kaus thesis, once again, this preceded deregulation by more than a year.

In the deregulated, white-knuckle year of 1980 there was one (yes, one) air carrier fatality. In the equally perilous deregulated skies of 1981 there were four.

But these good years are no more significant, statistically, than the bad years are. Neither fatality figures nor types of accident so far indicate that deregulation has had any effect on air safety at all, one way or another.

JERRY DOOLITTLE
West Cornwall, Connecticut

Jerry Doolittle was assistant administrator for public affairs at the FAA during the Carter administration.

The author replies:

As Mr. Doolittle well knows, the competitive pressures that accompanied air deregulation did not magically begin in October 1978 when President Carter signed the deregulation law. The handwriting had been on the wall for many months, and most airlines had already been looking for ways to cut costs and prepare for the intensified competition that awaited them. So it doesn't really matter whether American Airlines began cutting corners in 1977 or 1979. Corners were cut, and the DC-10 crash is still an illustration of how cost-competition can be dangerous.

I concede, as I tried to in my piece, that it's difficult to read much into current statistics because air disasters are rare and a single big crash can skew casualty figures for years. My basic point was that there is every reason to expect flying to prove less safe. A second point was that while liberals are usually quick to note the negative side effects of unbridled competition, they now have so much invested in deregulation that they react with automatic hostility to anyone who suggests safety might have declined. Mr. Doolittle's letter is itself evidence of this second point.

Doolittle is plain wrong about the Air Florida crash. On pages 65 and 66 of its report, the National Transportation Safety Board says that, since if "full thrust had been added immediately... the aircraft could probably have accelerated to a safe stall margin and continued flying, it believes that the flight crew hesitated in adding thrust because of the concern about exceeding normal engine limitations, which is ingrained throughout flight crew training programs." According to an NTSB spokeman, the crews are trained never to exceed those limitations, even for short periods, in order to avoid maintenance costs. I did err in saying Air Florida was trying to save on fuel, rather than maintenance.

Money Matters

Your piece on the monetary aberration ["The Cult of M1," Jonathan Rowe, November 1983] is excellent. I've never read one better. Do not relent.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH
Cambridge, Massachusetts

We included your comments in our publication at the House Republican Conference.

JACK KEMP
Washington, D.C.

Got That, Boys?

Many thanks for Phillip Keisling's excellent piece on Medicare ["Protection from Catastrophe: The Medicare Reform We Really Need"] in your November issue. Mr. Keisling made his most important point in the very last paragraph: "Ultimately, there should be no distinction between Social Security, Medicare, unemployment, and welfare; all should be part of one system that protects people against true need."

The great unknown truth of the federal budget crisis is that non-means-tested entitlement programs make up well over half of all non-defense expenditures and are escalating rapidly, while programs targeted to the truly needy are a small and shrinking portion of the budget. I hate to use the term, but there does seem to be a virtual conspiracy of silence on this most fundamental aspect of federal spending. Conservatives prefer to perpetuate the myth that "social spending" mainly benefits lazy welfare bums who buy vodka with change from their food stamps. Many liberals continue to speak of all entitlements as a seamless web of "progressive" programs. The mass-consumption press appears to be genuinely ignorant of any distinctions in the budget other than "guns" versus "butter."

As an active Democrat, I find it obscene that most of my party's national leaders (certainly Fritz Mondale, Ted Kennedy, Tip O'Neill, and most of all Claude Pepper) resist any modifications in middle-class entitlement programs, when they must surely realize that the cost of these programs is "squeezing" less popular low-income programs right out of existence. Introducing a means test for all entitlements would serve both fiscal responsibility and social justice. This goal should

Bookstores & Newsstands

Don't be surprised to find more and more people asking for *The Washington Monthly*. Avoid being caught empty-handed. Call Madelyn Colnes or Karl Ackerman at (202) 462-0128.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

become one of the founding principles of "neoliberalism," along with economic productivity and military reform. Since our putative neoliberal candidates for president (Askew, Hart, and Hollings) seem to be going nowhere in the polls, maybe one of them would adopt "getting the rich off welfare" as a campaign slogan.

KEVIN A. JENSEN
Atlanta, Georgia

Not 1 Cent for Selectrics

Now wait a minute. Mr. Art Ellison states in his letter ["Letters," December 1983]:

"Four million volunteers *are needed* to teach illiterate adults; however if only 1 percent of that number (40,000) were involved in lobbying local, state, and federal governments for substantial new funding, the benefits to illiterate adults would far exceed the gains achieved by those 40,000 volunteer adults tutoring illiterate students."

Faster and looser. How do we come by this information? Has Mr. Ellison said to himself, perhaps, something like this: "Well, we lobbyists here have managed to raise *X* dollars, so a thousand times us should be able to come up with *X*,000 dollars"? If he has, then he needs some public-policy tutoring. Surely there is a limit on the supply of funds. As a cause becomes popular, and its adherents increase, politicians rebuff no longer with: "I can't give you funds for *Y*, because the people don't care about *Y*," but with: "I can't give you funds because we've already started programs with the *Y* League, the National *Y* Guild, Women for *Y*, and the Urban *Y* Coalition." More hunters do not make for more game.

But, let's assume he was just being epigrammatic. How can anyone, especially a reader of this magazine, put such vintage 1969 faith in paid governmental efforts? If I may be allowed some vintage 1980 skepticism, wouldn't those substantial new funds increase the benefits to folks who are able to find employment with adult illiteracy projects? I think, too, of all the old Royals and Remingtons I see in the offices of small businesses and large banks, and all the sleek new Selectrics I see in the offices of government, universities, and other non-profit, ungreedy places.

Just as a few school districts are going back to primers sans illustrations and sans software, it is disappointing and disconcerting to hear a good-hearted person say: "Oh you volunteers, no tutoring today please—let's lobby."

I have been involved in several volunteer groups, including a mediation center, a neighborhood patrol, the March of Dimes, and tenant and homosexual rights efforts. I have been an effective volunteer, but in two attempts to involve myself in highly organized illiteracy programs, I was met with unbending bureaucracy, though I am now forever on one of their mailing lists.

A.P.J. O'CONNOR
Brooklyn, New York

The Washington Monthly

Editor in Chief Charles Peters. *Editors* Phillip Keisling, Timothy Noah, Jonathan Rowe.
Contributing Editors Jonathan Alter, Thomas N. Bethell, Tom Bethell, Marjorie Boyd, Taylor Branch, Gregg Easterbrook, James Fallows, Robert M. Kaus, Michael Kinsley, Nicholas Lemann, Suzannah Lessard, Arthur Levine, Joseph Nocera, Thomas Redburn, Leonard Reed, Walter Shapiro.
Editorial Advisory Board Graham Allison, James David Barber, Edgar Cahn, David Halberstam, Murray Kempton, Richard Reeves, Hugh Sidey.
Assistant to the Editor Carol Trueblood.
Book Editor Teresa Riordan.

Business Manager Karl Ackerman. *Art Director* Bevi Chagnon. *Advertising and Public Relations Director* Deborah A. Pfeiffer. *Circulation Director* Madelyn Colnes. *Interns* Kelley Cowles, Anne E. Depue, Paul D. Glastris, Ben Holmes. Mairi N. Morrison, David C. Schroeder.

Proofreaders and Volunteers Jane Beachner, Alan Cook, Cecelia Cunilio, Deena Flinchum, Dana Frix, James Gibney, Cary Hoagland, Janice Hughes, Quinith Janssen, Marybeth Kerrigan, Shela Turpin-Forster, Anne T. Weinstein, Bill Wheatley.

Published monthly except combined July/August issue by The Washington Monthly Company, 1711 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009, (202) 462-0128.

Copyright 1984 by The Washington Monthly Co. All rights reserved. Reproduction by any method whatsoever without permission is prohibited.

ISSN 0043-0633.

Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $24; two years, $44; three years, $59. Additional charges per year, foreign subscriptions: Canada, $3; other, $25 air mail, $3 surface mail. Back issues, $3. Send all remittances and correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of address to 1711 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009. For change of address, please provide four weeks' notice and return old address label.

The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, the Social Science Index, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48106.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.

YOU CAN HELP

Sometimes it's easy to forget how much **The Washington Monthly** depends on its readers. Our Memos of the Month come almost entirely from you. Clippings from local papers mailed to us inspire many of the items in Tidbits and Outrages and Tilting at Windmills. Readers also help us in countless other ways, calling with tips for stories, giving their friends subscriptions, or just making sure we're on the shelves of their local newsstands, bookstores, and libraries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

Volume Sixteen, Number One
February 1984

Tilting at Windmills
by Charles Peters
Reflections after 15 years...
Rochester goes Japanese...
and other odds and ends... 6

Murder by Deportation
by Jonathan Rowe
Why the State Department sends Salvadoran refugees home to die. 12

The Culpability Trap
by Jack Cloherty
Why the deputy fire chief was punished after he corrected the fatal defect. 24

Mis-led and Under-worked
by Phillip Keisling
Life in today's Air Force. 28

The Big Massage
by Timothy Noah
How the idea of the sixties takes the politics out of the eighties. 39

'Care for a Spin in My Chateau, Postmaster?'
by Richard Meyer
How the Postal Service turns first-class customers into second-class citizens. 46

On Political Books
by Bill Keller
Richard Viguerie isn't all wrong. But he still isn't ready to lead. 56

LETTERS 2
MEMO OF THE MONTH 23
MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD 37
POLITICAL BOOKNOTES 59
POLITICAL PUZZLE 45
TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES 27
WHO'S WHO 38

Cover photo by Brad Doherty for WGBH-TV's Frontline report "Sanctuary"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TILTING AT WINDMILLS

Two years ago the Army introduced a new battle uniform for combat troops. The problem is that when it was issued, according to one official report, "responses from the field were universally unfavorable." The Grenadan invasion force in particular complained that the uniform was too hot and heavy, and there is evidence that this is so even in temperate climates. So what's the Army going to do? According to the Associated Press, it's going right ahead with plans to spend $400 million to buy more of the uniforms....

The Reagan administration has a good idea. It wants to eliminate 40,000 jobs in the GS 11-15 range. It's a good idea because that's where the fat is most conspicuous. But it's going about it the wrong way, with across-the board cuts in every agency. So the handful of efficient, well-run agencies where everyone works hard all day will suffer just as much as those that appear to be on a perpetual coffee break....

Did you know that the risk of those Navy reconnaissance flights over Lebanon could have been avoided? The Israelis use pilotless drones for such work. They offered to let us have some of their drones. The Pentagon, in its great wisdom, said, "No thanks."...

If appearances are correct, some good guys have finally attained power in Argentina and are running considerable personal risk in taking on the military on the issue of all those Argentines who have simply disappeared in recent years. I hope some prominent members of Congress will visit Buenos Aires to show support for the new government. Since it is not right-wing authoritarian, it does not seem likely to win the warm support of the Reagan administration....

Those of you who fear that America is losing its productive genius will not be comforted to learn that Eastman Kodak, for so long the proud creator and manufacturer of its own products, did not develop and is not making its new color video camera. The camera is being produced by Matsushita, which as you may guess is not located in Rochester, New York. A Kodak spokesman says, "With our joint venture with Matsushita, we can spend our money on marketing, advertising, and promotion, not on retooling for manufacturing."...

While the fellows who run the Soviet Union have never erred on the side of being nice guys, lately things appear to be getting worse. According to a recent report from Moscow by Robert Gillette of *The Los Angeles Times*: "Soviet authorities detained, tried, and convicted a Moscow human rights activist, Tatyana Trusova, in a single day and immediately dispatched her to a labor camp." Previously, Gillette points out, they at least had tried to give an appearance of due process, which meant the victim could count on several months' delay before being shipped to Siberia....

Fifteen years have gone by since the first issue of this magazine was published. What have we accomplished over those years? That's hard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to say because the results of our efforts remain unclear. It's easier to talk about what we've been trying to do, for we're very clear about that.

We've been trying to create a new kind of political journalism and a new kind of political thought. Both efforts spring from the same desire to connect ideas with facts, to look at reality without having our vision limited by the blinders imposed by the conventional political views of the right or left, to see problems in the round, not in one-dimensional slices as prisoners of the old biases tended to do.

We rejected the traditional distinction between journalist and intellectual. We felt that journalists were not thinking about the meaning of the stories they were writing and intellectuals were failing to immerse themselves in experiences that might make them see how their thinking should change. The intellectual pondered in his study while the reporter was out slogging through the facts.

We wanted one person to find the facts and to think about their significance. That meant we had to recruit young people who had not been brainwashed by the conventional journalistic training that taught reporters to be stenographers. It also meant that we had to recruit writers who had the intellectual curiosity and courage to partake of many disciplines, including history, economics, political science, psychology, and anthropology, in order to portray the fullness of the problems they reported and to explore the range and depth of the possible solutions.

We also rejected much of the traditional distinction between journalist and novelist. Of course, the journalist shouldn't make up his stories. But there is no reason he should not try to bring to his work the novelist's flair for conveying mood and tone and feeling. Certainly, he should strive to attain the empathy the best novelists have for the people they describe, for empathy is the key to understanding motivation, which in turn is so often the key to understanding the behavior of the public figures journalists cover.

Obviously none of us at the *Monthly* has succeeded in being all that we wanted—God knows there have been times we've fallen on our faces trying. But along with a number of writers from other publications, we have begun to break down the prejudices that kept journalists from believing that they could or should possess and use in their work the skills of the novelist and of the intellectual.

Out of this new kind of reporting, there has emerged a new political philosophy that has come to be called neoliberalism. When we looked, for example, at the problem of the economy, we saw that labor and management shared the guilt. If we had worn conservative or liberal blinders, we would have seen the fault of only one. And if we had not tried to see the problem whole, we would have failed to see that the problem is usually not one-dimensionally evil labor leaders or corporate executives. Instead, by trying to see beyond ideological and economic forces to the psychology of human beings reacting to institutional pressures, we saw why perfectly decent labor leaders were bullied by the lowest common denominator of their constituency and perfectly decent managers were seduced by short-term profit.

Trying to see both sides does not mean that we end up as middle-of-the-roaders who split the difference between extremes. We are moderates in temperament, having a high regard for civility and common sense, but our solutions can stray far from the middle of the road. Sometimes, as with our call for a return to political patronage as a way of restoring democratic accountability, we shock both the right and left. We have been attacked by the *Nation* and *Commonweal* on the left and by the *National Review*, *Human Events*, and *The American Spectator* on the right. Liberals tend to regard the civil service as sacred and untouchable, and conservatives, though skeptical of bureaucracy, fear giving more power to the people. Neoliberals simply say: look at the facts as they are now. At one time there was too much political patronage; now there's too much civil service, and the performance of government agencies like the post office is suffering because of it. The essence of neoliberalism is a continuing willingness to take such fresh looks at the facts and to change our minds when the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

facts change. This doesn't mean we're rudderless pragmatists. We are liberals who believe in the Golden Rule, the First Amendment, and the Declaration of Independence. But that is the extent of our ideological inflexibility. . . .

Ernest Hollings is probably the brightest and most engaging of the Democratic presidential candidates. Unfortunately, his Southern accent is so thick that it's hard for Yankees to understand him. Thus when he was interviewed by *The New York Times* recently, "more steaming hours" came out as "more scheming hours," General Seignious became General "Sieglitz," the AH-64 helicopter became the E-64. One mangling of a Hollings remark on Social Security could lose him the vote of everyone over the age of 50—"they'd not receive that COLA for one year" became "they'd not receive that all for one year." . . .

For those who think that a communist government, while possibly not quite solicitous enough about human rights, would nevertheless do much better than capitalism in curbing industrial abuses, there is this report by Reuters from Moscow:

"Heavy industrial pollution is killing off thousands of acres of forest around the Soviet auto-making city of Togliatti, the Communist party daily, *Pravda*, said today in a rare report on the environment.

"It said 'bitter smoke' hung permanently over the hills and around the industrial center on the Volga River and suggested ecological damage would soon create a wasteland there." . . .

The high moral tone of the bar continues to manifest itself. Consider the 20 to 30 elite drug lawyers who offer highly skilled counsel to major smugglers. "Many of the elite," according to the *Los Angeles Times*, "are former prosecutors, respected lawyers, who lecture at law schools and anchor prestigious firms."

"It's just a fact that some of the best lawyers handle the drug cases," says a Florida law professor. Why? What inspires them to respond to this calling? "It's the numbers," says the professor, "fees perhaps of $250,000."

"Most drug arrests," reports the *Times*, "begin with some kind of police search; some of the searches involve warrants. The drug lawyer invariably challenges the warrant or the search in hopes of getting the evidence suppressed on the grounds that it was seized unconstitutionally." This tactic avoids embarrassing courtroom scenes with bags of cocaine stacked in front of the jury.

One of these elite lawyers, when faced wih a client who had been caught with 400 pounds of cocaine, discovered that the police had acted on a tip provided by a confidential informant. He persuaded the court that he was entitled to the name of the informant. The informant was too valuable for the state to expose so the case was dropped.

This is a perfect example of the insanity of the law. If the defendant was caught red-handed with the cocaine, what possible relevance did the name of the informant have to the case? It might have been relevant if there was any possibility that the client was falsely accused of possessing cocaine, but since he was arrested with the stuff in his possession, there was no way the identity of the tipster could bear on the issue of guilt or innocence. . . .

I hope you didn't miss Russell Baker's column proposing that we give Japan one American lawyer for every Japanese car we import. The high promise of this idea is apparent from the fact that we now have 600,000 lawyers and we plan to import 600,000 Japanese cars.

Baker fears, however, that the Japanese are on to him, and quotes a secret memorandum from Tokyo: "These schemers have plans for infesting our society with hundreds of thousands of men cunningly trained in the art of stopping all constructive activity, of bringing entire societies to a dead standstill." . . .

Judges, you must remember, started out as lawyers, so you can't expect them to be much of an improvement. Take the Supreme Court of Montana, which not long ago

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proclaimed that the state's government agencies must give absolute preference in hiring to veterans and the disabled. Does the court practice what it preaches? Of course not. The judges realize it's a silly decision so they simply ignore it in their own hiring....

Those of us who tend to favor a considerable amount of deregulation have been forced to swallow some unhappy consequences in our airline and telephone service. We are also probably going to have to accept the fact that banking deregulation has not been an unqualified success either. With the lifting of ceilings on interest rates that can be paid on deposits, financial institutions have had to pay more interest to attract deposits, which is one reason they are charging more interest on the money they loan.

Not only do these institutions seek a higher return on the money they loan, they also seek a higher return on the money they invest. This in turn drives up the interest that has to be paid on corporate and municipal bonds....

Another liberal view that may require modification is the belief that making people share in the cost of their health care might cause people to get less care than they need. But a recent Rand Corporation study seems to suggest otherwise. It found no difference in the health of one group that had received free care and another that had shared, by paying a modest part, the cost of the service. Together with an earlier Rand study that found health care costs were 50 percent higher for the free-care group than for the cost-sharers, it suggests that cost-sharing may be a way to reduce medical costs without harming health. Anyway, the point here, as with the deregulation cases above, is that we must always be ready to re-examine our prejudices in the light of experience. That readiness, remember, is the essence of neoliberalism....

Here's the latest installment of Reaganomics Meets Rodeo Drive. A car dealer in New York is advertising in a bold headline "TO YOU IT'S A $40,000 MERCEDES BENZ. TO THE IRS, IT'S A $40,000 TAX DEDUCTION." The ad goes on to explain that "certain provisions in the 1982 tax code" permit you to reduce your taxable income by figuring depreciation on your Mercedes and taking the investment tax credit—by the entire $40,000 cost in three years....

Speaking of tax deductions, I'm sure you want to know the latest on how our friends the lawyers are getting theirs. Next month's Mid-Winter Convention (note: here's another example of the trend toward taking taxpayers to the cleaners twice a year by holding both winter and summer conventions) of the American Trial Lawyers Association offers "a perfect way to blend education, relaxation, good eating, fascinating shopping, and sheer good fun." The convention will be held in New Orleans during Mardi Gras week. We are of course completely confident that emphasis will be given to the educational aspect....

The National Education Association is once again demonstrating its dedication to improving our schools. It has, according to the Associated Press, launched an attack on a plan to require teachers in Arkansas to take competency tests, charging that testing would be "demeaning" to teachers. AP quotes the president of the Arkansas Education Association as saying, people "will certainly think twice before they enter the teaching profession in the state of Arkansas." If the tests are sensible, only incompetent teachers will have to think twice. Is that bad?...

The NEA wants its members judged by credentials instead of by competence. Yet over and over again we learn how meaningless credentials can be. The latest example comes from Lynchburg College in Virginia, where Professor James B. Cocking was, according to *The Washington Post*, described by students and other professors as "brilliant" and "a sparkling teacher" of Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish, and had been the winner of the college's distinguished teaching award in 1981.

Cocking, it turns out, didn't have any advanced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

degrees. He was, of course, fired immediately. Yet what difference does it make whether he had any degrees? If he had the ability to teach languages to American students he had one of the rarest and most clearly demonstrable of academic skills.

These cases are always complicated by the fact that the faculty member in question has lied about his credentials, so that his dismissal can be justified on that ground alone. Nevertheless, the point remains that actual knowledge of a subject and ability to communicate it to others, and not credentials, should be the relevant factors in judging teachers....

I was delighted by the resolution of the Eastern Airlines strike. Eastern had a problem, shared by many other airlines, of labor costs that were too high. At first it tried to strong-arm its unions into accepting a cut. Then wiser heads prevailed and a compromise was reached under which the workers accepted a substantial cut but got 25 percent of the company's stock in exchange. Thus, if their sacrifice helps make the company prosperous again, they are assured of a fair share of the profits they helped create....

Three of the more infamous military abuses of the taxpayer are coming under attack these days. One is the commissary system, which sells servicemen and retirees groceries, appliances, and lots of other things at prices 25 percent or more below what the rest of us pay. The commissaries were established when most military bases were in the deserts out West or in other places far removed from civilization—and when the military was underpaid. So the idea of the government establishing stores in these distant places and offering bargains seemed only the right thing to do. But now almost all bases are surrounded by regular stores, the military is well paid, and we taxpayers should save ourselves $324 million by shutting down the commissaries, which is the recommendation of the Grace Commission.

At the same time, the Treasury Department is considering abolishing the mortgage interest deduction for military personnel who receive a housing allowance. That's not fair, you say. They should get the same tax break the rest of us get. But the catch is they now get two breaks for the same thing—one the mortgage interest deduction, the other the housing allowance, which just happens to be tax-free.

The third and greatest outrage is the retirement system under which military personnel can retire at half pay after only 20 years of service. Even the Pentagon can't stomach this—one of its study commissions is going to recommend that retirement pay be cut from 50 to 35 percent. But the real answer is to abolish 20-year retirement. We should encourage good people not to leave but to stay by offering more generous retirement after much longer service....

My friend George Ott points out that while Ronald Reagan says, "In virtually every measure of military power, the Soviet Union enjoys a decided advantage," military leaders sing a somewhat different tune:

First let's hear from General John Vessey, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Asked if he would trade his capabilities with those of Marshal Ogarkov, his opposite number in the U.S.S.R., General Vessey replied, "Not on your life." Earlier, his predecessor, General David Jones, when asked the same question, responded, "I would not swap our present military capability with that of the Soviet Union."

Now let's hear from Admiral Thomas Hayward, recently retired chief of naval operations: "I would not trade the U.S. Navy for the Soviet Navy under any circumstances." And General Lew Allen, former Air Force chief of staff, says: "I would not trade the United States Air Force for its Soviet counterpart. Our people are better motivated, trained, and educated than their Soviet counterparts, and in most areas the quality of our weaponry is unsurpassed. ...There is no question that the U.S. Air Force is the finest in the world."...

Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and the other debtor nations may be in better shape than they realize. Those who are into American banks for really substantial sums may actually be in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

driver's seat. They can just about call their own tune on the terms of repayment, renegotiating both the length of the loan and the amount of interest. If the banks don't like it, what are they going to do—foreclose on Brazil? The banks are in fact terrified that the debtor nations will repudiate their debt and thus reveal the banks' balance sheets as the fictions that they are....

At a somewhat more modest level of the banking business, Jeffrey Kummer and Jim McCartney of the St. Paul, Minnesota, Pioneer Press have revealed that the local Metropolitan Council switched a $5.2 million deposit to the Capitol City State Bank shortly after the bank had loaned $750,000 to the council president and his firm. This is a common practice, not only by state and local government officials but by officials of private organizations that have substantial funds to deposit. The bank that gets the deposit makes sure that the official who steered it to the bank is taken care of whenever he needs a loan....

Skilled practitioners of the art of public relations—in the old days they were called press agents—can come up with items that get their clients mentioned in the press but that are interesting or amusing enough that few people realize what's going on or mind it if they do. Unfortunately, such skill is uncommon, and unless editors are vigilant, we are treated to items like this one from the "Washington Ways" column of *The Washington Post*:

"**Rose Narva**, the eminence elegante of the refurbished Hay-Adams Hotel, may seem out of step as the rest of Washington dances off toward the Super Bowl, but there's a reason: Her thing in life is luxury hotels, not gridiron heroics. In fact, as Narva flew off to Lincoln, Nebraska, a few weeks ago, it was not to pay homage to the Nebraska Cornhuskers (pre-Miami, when they were Number 1 among college footballers) but to help her boss, multimillionaire financier **David Murdoch** open his newly reborn hotel, also known as the Cornhusker. So when she found the hotel and most of the town draped with big red 'Ns' upon her arrival, naturally she thought they were welcoming Narva, not celebrating University of Nebraska football fanaticism."...

Speaking of the *Post*, I fear that the people who write its editorials have an excessive regard for the experts. Not long ago they ran an editorial urging "more caution in revising the insanity defense," recommending that the views of the American Bar Association and the American Psychiatric Association be given great weight, and concluding, "Lawyers and psychiatrists are the professionals most closely involved with the insanity defense, and their views should be persuasive."

This sounds eminently respectable and indeed it is the respectable opinion. It is also wrong. You don't have to be a lawyer or a psychiatrist to have the common sense to realize that insanity has nothing to do with whether someone committed a crime or not and that it should not be used—as is the case in most states today—as a defense that can keep the perpetrator from being found guilty of doing what he in fact did. Insanity, on the other hand, should be considered in determining the treatment accorded the convicted person. And it doesn't take a lawyer or a psychiatrist to understand that either.

The *Post* next, in an editorial entitled "He Shouldn't Have Done It," condemned Jesse Jackson for intruding "into a sensitive foreign negotiation whose ins and outs could not possibly have been fully known to him." In other words, Jesse should have left it to the experts, those same fellows who have been doing such a wonderful job for us all the time we've been in Lebanon....

A recent column by Peter Pringle of the *London Observer* reminded me of the disaster that was Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program, under which we gave atomic secrets to the world under the illusion that they would be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. The Voice of America produced broadcasts entitled "Atomic Locomotive Designed" and "Forestry Expert Predicts Atomic Rays Will Cut Lumber." No timber was felled but there seems to be no doubt that the program permitted India, and probably several other countries, to build the bomb.

—*Charles Peters*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MURI
DEPOR

Jose Hernandez (above, right)

Jonathan Rowe is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ER BY TATION

Why the State Department sends Salvadoran refugees home to die

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In October of 1982, 22 Salvadorans were found locked in the airtight trailer of a refrigerated tractor truck just outside of Edinburg, Texas. They had been abandoned by smugglers who had brought them into the country illegally. Four had died of asphyxiation. The rest were handed over to immigration officials, who promptly deported them, as they do virtually all other Salvadorans whom they catch within our borders.

There is some question as to whether 19-year-old Jose Hernandez was among those found in the trailer. But there is no question that he was among those held at the detention center that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) maintains near Port Isabel, when the Brownsville *Herald* sent a reporter there to follow up on the fate of those taken from the truck. The resulting story featured a picture of Jose and his cousin, with whom he had made the long trek from their native country. Jose had been a wounded government soldier whose family was threatened by guerrilla rebels. "I'm scared," Jose told the *Herald*. "I know the guerrillas are looking for me. But I guess this is God's will. He knows what He is doing and why He does it."

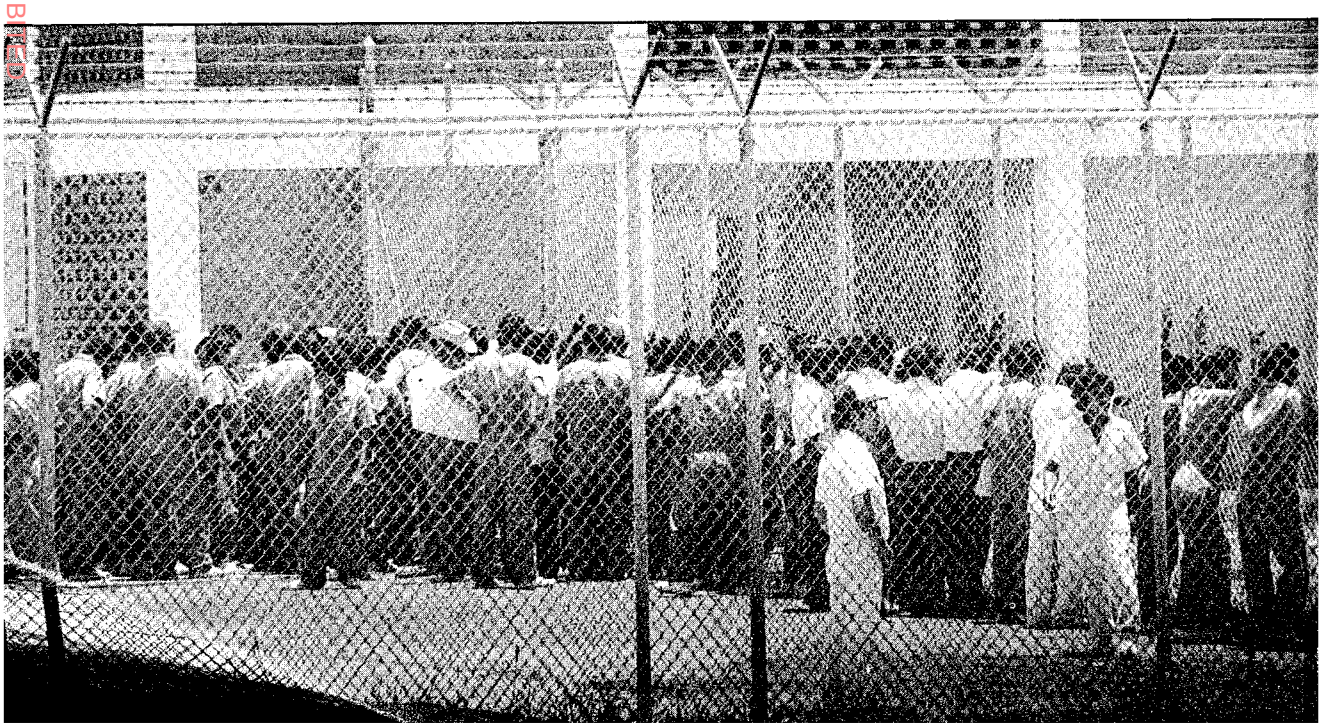
Not long after he was deported, another picture of Jose Hernandez appeared in Brownsville. Jose's brother, who had recently entered illegally himself, brought the picture to Linda Yanez, a Brownsville attorney who devotes half her time to helping Salvadorans in trouble with Immigration. The picture showed Jose lying in a coffin, his head attached by a white cloth to the rest of his body. There were three bullet wounds in his chest.

BY JONATHAN ROWE

It happened that the day the picture arrived, Yanez was in Washington, D.C., meeting with Elliot Abrams, President Reagan's assistant secretary of state for human rights, trying to impress upon him the need for us to show more concern for Salvadoran refugees like Hernandez. Abrams has primary responsibility for our policy in this area, and he has persistently maintained that the Salvadorans we send back face no particular danger. Yanez sent copies of the pictures to Abrams and asked him to investigate. A month later she received a call, she says, from one of Abrams's subordinates. They were unable to confirm anything, they said. "But we are acting in good faith," the aide added. The administration's policy went on as before. It continues to deny that the vast majority of Salvadorans have any legitimate reason to flee their country, or that we have any responsibility to help them when they arrive.

Yet Salvadorans continue to flee, by the thousands. By most estimates, there are 300,000 to 500,000 in the United States at this moment, and half of these may have crossed the border since the outbreak of civil war there in 1980. It is not hard to understand why people are leaving. They are caught in the middle between a brutal and ugly government, linked to paramilitary organizations and death squads, and perhaps equally brutal guerrillas with apparent links to Cuba. From January to June of this year, the Christian Legal Aid organization recorded 324 "forced disappearances" among civilians, which left 554 children orphaned, and 2,823 arbitrary executions, of which the nation's armed forces were responsible for 1,657. (Like most statistics regarding El Salvador, these must not be taken as precise.) Ten percent of the population have been routed from their homes, more than during the Vietnam war at its worst. If these people have not fled, they are probably living in refugee camps, or at sanctuaries like Refugio La Basilica, in the capital city, San Salvador, where 300 people have been living for two to three years. A 14-year-old girl named Beatriz told a Pacific News Service reporter that she has spent one day outside this sanctuary since she was 11.

It is the special terror of El Salvador today that nobody escapes the polarizing field of the bloody conflict. You are a doctor treating suspected insurgents, or even just refugees? You must be a sympathizer yourself. Ricardo Perez volunteered to care for refugees in church-run refugee camps. He was picked up by the National Guard and spent three weeks in jail. You are a teacher raising questions about the present regime? A terrorist group like the Rightwing Terrorist Army (one of whose slogans is "Dialogue is Treason") may set off a bomb at your house, as it has done to teachers at the Jesuit-run University of Central America. You are a 16-year-old male and not enlisted in the army? "Almost all the young men who have not entered military service have been killed or have been forced to flee, because they are presumed to be guerrillas or sympathizers with the opposition," said Jose Rosales, a 27-year-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

old former sergeant who fled because, in his words, "I did not agree with the current government's policies of kidnapping, torture, and murder of innocent civilians, under the guise of fighting subversion." Women and children are not treated with any favor. Last November 19, Reuters reported that the Salvadoran Atlcatl Battalion had herded 20 women and children into a house and shot them. The sole survivor, ten-year-old Aquilano Gravier, said he had fallen under his mother's body and "played dead until the soldiers left."

A gang war has consumed this entire country. Gretta Siebentritt, at the Central American Refugee Center (Carecen) in the Adams Morgan section of Washington, D.C., rolls off the kinds of cases that come to them every day. There was the young man whose girlfriend's former boyfriend was both jealous and a member of the National Guard. The young man was classified a "subversive." He fled. There was the young man who was away working in San Salvador the day unidentified men came looking for him at his home. Not finding him, the men ransacked the house, and then loaded the man's father and sister into a truck. The mother screamed with such vehemence that they threw the daughter off; but the father they took away and killed. Friends contacted the older son in San Salvador, and he fled promptly to the U.S. He made enough money to bring his brothers and sisters. The INS has apprehended all of them, and sent them back.

If ever there were a deserving object for our generosity and concern, these fleeing Salvadorans would seem to be it. This is especially so because our own government is up to its neck in this conflict ("using our own tax dollars" as our president might remind us in other contexts). Instead of striving to protect innocent civilians from atrocities on both sides, and instead of putting all of our influence towards finding a livable resolution, our government has weighed in squarely behind the present Salvadoran government, to the tune of a quarter of a billion dollars a year, mostly in military and related "economic" aid. That is twenty-fold more than we were giving as recently as 1979, and a draft report of the Kissinger Commission is urging that we raise that by another $150 million. We are training many of the government's troops as well.

It is not necessary to say that the conflict is "all our fault," which it certainly is not, or that the guerrillas are somehow "right," to suggest that we might summon some generosity for those who flee these nightmarish conditions for which we at least share the responsibility. And indeed, our law makes ample provision for cases such as these. We have adopted, for example, the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees, which requires—not permits; requires— us to admit any person who is outside of his or her country "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Our commissioner of immigration can, in addition, defer action in cases where immediate deportation would be "unconscionable or result in undue hardship." The commissioner can also grant something called "extended voluntary departure" in cases of a "temporary inability to return to one's country on account of civil war or catastrophic circumstances." This status is presently enjoyed by Ethiopians, Poles, Lebanese, Afghans, and Ugandans. We used it in the past to help those fleeing both Pinochet and Allende in Chile. It seems tailor-made for the plight in which Salvadorans find themselves now.

The Reagan administration does not think so, however. Despite our laws, despite the bloody war in El Salvador and our role in it, the administration has been rounding up these people and deporting them just as fast as it can. In 1982 it

United Press International photo

At left, inspection time at the Bayview (Texas) detention center. Inmates are lined up outside while their sleeping quarters are searched; after that they are searched for weapons, pens, writing paper, and other prohibited materials. At right, Salvadorans deported from El Centro, California, board a bus for a motel at the Mexico City airport where they will await a plane for El Salvador.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

began deportation proceedings against 10,000 Salvadorans. Between January 1 and March 31 of 1983, of the 1,457 Salvadorans who formerly sought asylum here, only 2 percent received it. Large numbers were muscled off before they even had a chance to assert this claim. These were not the decisions of lower-level functionaries. "We are following a policy set for us at the top," one district director in the Immigration Service told a United Nations commission investigating our treatment of Salvadorans here.

The reason, moreover, is a mindset of rigid ideology that makes the Reagan administration unable to see something as simple and tangible as the suffering of our neighbors.

It is roughly 2,000 miles from the El Salvador border to the Rio Grande—that's the distance from Chicago to L.A.— and the trip is not one you would take for a lark. If you are wealthy, of course, you can probably get a visa, hop on a plane, and enter the United States legally. But the El Salvador government ceased permitting most visas to the United States long ago, knowing full well what most people had in mind. Those who are middle class and below must therefore get tourist visas to Mexico, gather up their savings, assemble the addresses of friends and relatives in the U.S., and board a bus. Some hitchhike. In Mexico they contend with Mexican immigration officials, who are notorious for their shakedowns. "When we got to Mexico City," one of two sisters recalled for the *Christian Science Monitor*, "we were stopped by officers in green uniforms with badges. They said give them all our money or they would rape us." When these girls asked what they were supposed to do without money, they were told they could become prostitutes. At Benjamin Hill, 75 miles south of the border crossing in Nogales, there is an infamous "double checkpoint." Salvadorans and others are stripped of their money at first, but told they can continue. Then, at the second, they are arrested.

If the refugees are lucky, they will link up with someone like Jim Corbett, a retired U.S. rancher and a Quaker, who runs a sort of underground railroad in his old Chevy pickup truck. Corbett averts checkpoints through circuitous back routes, arranges borrowed IDs, and shepherds Salvadorans to, among other places, the 70-odd U.S. churches that are now granting sanctuary to these refugees in defiance of U.S. law. Corbett has brought in roughly 300 refugees this way. (He has become so well known through feature stories in such publications as *People* magazine and *The Washington Post* that he now limits his role mainly to coordinating the efforts of others.) The less lucky will link up with a "coyote," or paid smuggler, such as the one who abandoned the 22 Salvadorans near Edinburg. One woman, now living in Washington, D.C, was threatened several times by the National Guard, and finally paid a coyote $3,000 to smuggle her two oldest children over the border. The children were nailed into packing crates with slits on the bottom so they could breathe, and loaded onto a flatbed truck. Many take their chances wading the river and crawling through the grass the way Mexicans do every day.

Once here, Salvadorans make their way to centers like Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, where they can join relatives and blend in with the crowd. Forty thousand have congregated in this way on Long Island alone. They can get jobs and live here for months, even years, in constant fear of any contact with authority that might betray their illegality. Check a restaurant, a hotel, an office-cleaning or landscaping crew in one of the above cities, and you are likely to find a Salvadoran that the immigration authorities would like to find also. Frequently, they do.

Once apprehended, a Salvadoran has a right to a deportation trial, at which he or she can plea for asylum. But the administration has been doing everything it can to get those captured to sign "voluntary departure" forms by which they waive any such right and "agree" to depart on their own. The testimony of Doris Elia Estrada in a recent lawsuit protesting the administration's practices is instructive: "The INS official told me that I could not get political asylum in the United States and that I would have to remain in jail for a long period of time," Estrada recalled. "Moreover, he told me that I would be placed in a cell with men, leaving me with the impression that I would be sexually molested. He also told me that [not] only [would] my political asylum application be denied, but that they would inform the authorities in El Salvador of all the information that I had given them." One plaintiff in the lawsuit, Jose Adilman Barahona, asked specifically to apply for asylum. He was told that such protection is not available.

Those who refuse to sign the form are held until their trial at one of several detention centers the Reagan administration has established. The aim seems to be to make life as miserable as possible. The center at Port Isabel, for example, is called by Salvadorans "El Corralon"—"The Big Corral." The United Nations investigation com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

photo by Mickey Torres

A 17-year-old Salvadoran woman in a detention center (left) keeps wet towel over her head for relief from the burning Texas sun. Passing time at the Bayview detention center (below, bottom).

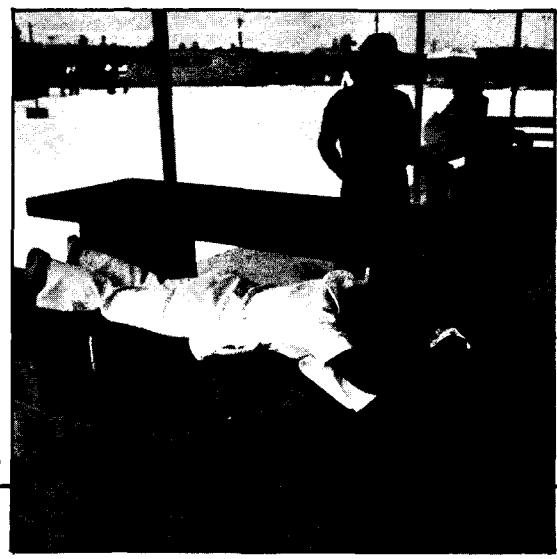
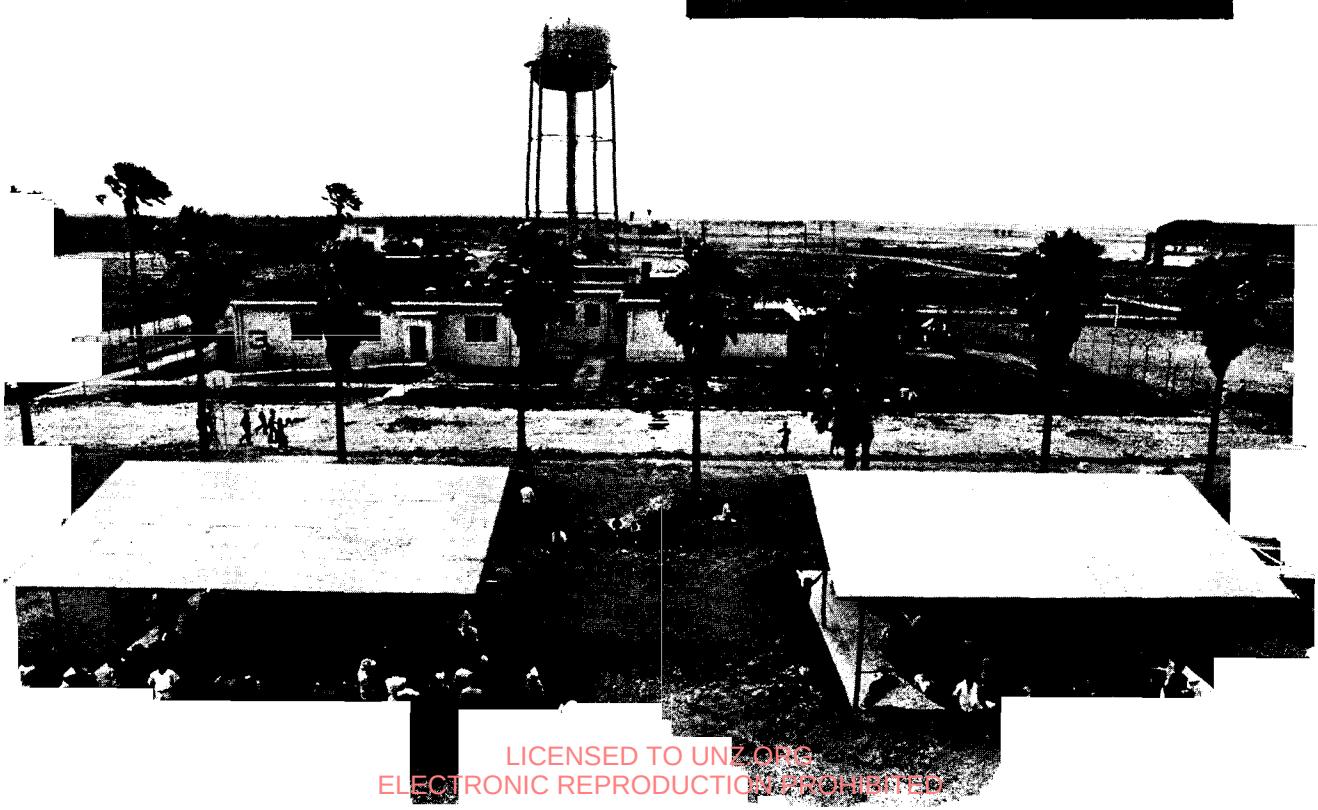


photo by Mickey Torres

photo by Brad Doherty for WGBH, Boston (bottom)



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mission reported that "some [of the detainees] said they would prefer returning to El Salvador, even if this meant facing death." At the Los Fresnos Center, officials confiscated papers containing the names and addresses of friends, and even refused to make pens and pencils or other writing materials available. (A court order has put a halt to some of these practices.) "We can't go public with some of the nicer, more humane things we do," said INS District Director Hal Boldin, in the agency's defense. "That would be an invitation to unlawful entry."

It is possible for those taken to detention centers to get out on bond. The administration has set these bonds at $5,000 to $7,500, higher than we demand, say, of Mexicans. Many manage to scrape the money together nevertheless, from relatives and friends. In the border towns, you hear of notary publics who insert themselves as middlemen, pumping the detainee's relatives for well over the amount of the bond and pocketing the excess themselves. (In Latin America, "Notarios" are high-powered attorneys, and refugees assume that our notary publics are similarly important here.)

Salvadorans who stay in detention get their cases heard first. Those out on bond go to the end of the line. Given the enormous backlog of over 150,000 asylum cases (not all of which are active, however), it can take six months, even a year, before a case is called. Those who parried with their draft boards during the sixties will recognize the ways immigration lawyers try to play out the string: asking for a change in venue, seeking a postponement, one thing or another that can put off the day of reckoning by months, even more.

That day does arrive, however, and it is not likely to impress upon newcomers to our shores the fairness of the American legal system. Asylum claims come before something called an immigration judge. These judges used to be part of the INS itself, and a good many are former INS prosecutors who rose up through the ranks. They have spent their careers trying to think up reasons why the aliens shouldn't get in. A few years ago, the judges were moved into a separate agency, but most of them simply brought their old attitudes with them. They tend to be not overly sympathetic. Paula Perlman, who represents Salvadorans at the detention center in El Centro, California, recalls the time she tried to show the judge there a gunshot wound on a Salvadoran's body, and had a surgeon testify that the wound in question was, in fact, that. No good, the judge said. He would accept nothing less than the opinion of a qualified forensic expert who had actually witnessed the shooting. This, the refugee had difficulty arranging. The judge, who is a former immigration clerk, has granted only two asylum applications in the last five years, Perlman says.

> To grant asylum to refugees from El Salvador would undermine the administration's elegant distinction between refugees from 'totalitarian' governments to whom asylum is readily granted, and those fleeing governments that are merely 'authoritarian.'

The root of the problem, however, goes back to the State Department, to the heart of the Reagan administration. During the Nixon years, the State Department began the practice of offering its opinion on each and every asylum claim. That sounds reasonable enough. After all, isn't the department our foreign policy expert? The problem is, the State Department's consuming passion is to avoid offending governments we consider our friends. This is especially so with a regime like that in El Salvador, which the Reagan administration is trying so desperately to prop up. To grant asylum to refugees from this country might not seem awfully flattering either to El Salvador's government, or to our support of it.

Then too, there is the mindset represented by human rights chief Elliot Abrams. Abrams is a candid and engaging man who worked for Democratic Senators Henry Jackson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan before campaigning for Ronald Reagan in 1980. He adheres to that school of foreign policy thinking called "neoconser-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elliot Abrams, assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs.

vative," which was born largely in reaction to liberals, who, neoconservatives say, gloss over the scheming and brutality of the Soviet Union, and romanticize those who rebel against our client dictators. Instead, neoconservatives support our client dictators and see most world conflicts as a test of our resolve against the Soviet Union. In her well-known *Commentary* article "Dictatorships and Double Standards," U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick spun out an elaborate intellectual distinction between "totalitarian" (communist) governments, and merely "authoritarian" ones, to try to justify our support of the latter in terms higher than mere convenience.

It's all fine in theory. But the people in El Salvador do not enjoy the luxury of making such nice distinctions between authoritarian and totalitarian. The atrocities of either look remarkably similar when you are on the receiving end. In practice, the Kirkpatrick logic inclines us to show more concern for repressive governments than for those subject to them. The administration becomes so obsessed with superpower conflict in general that it loses the ability—even the desire—to see human need in the concrete. This comes through in the way the Reagan administration actually handles the Salvadoran asylum applications.

The department has assigned this task to one Jules Bassin, a retired official who comes in three days a week for that purpose. Testifying under oath in a lawsuit last September, Bassin conceded that he had been in El Salvador but once in his life, in 1942, that he had never read a book on the country, and that most of his reading on the subject consisted of articles in magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Time*, along with irregular State Department telegrams. In the course of his testimony, Bassin was asked about his knowledge of the fate of the Salvadorans we deport:

Q. Do you have any other information as to what happens to deportees in El Salvador?

A. No information, no.

Q. And have you, yourself, made any inquiry?

A. No, I haven't.

Q. And why is that?

A. Because it is not my job to make inquiries of Salvador. They have to be made by others.

Q. Have you made any inquiry of the State Department or any person within the State Department?

A. No.

Q. And why is that?

A. I did not have the occasion or the need to do it.

Bassin was also asked if he considers himself well-versed on the subject of death squads and political violence in El Salvador. His job, after all, is to determine whether those we deport might be subject to such violence. "No" was his reply.

The State Department commonly sends back the asylum applications with a cryptic remark about their being "frivolous" or the like, and the judge follows this recommendation in virtually every case. No one ever gets to ask why the application was found undeserving.

But wait, the administration says. We are only enforcing the law. Look at the standard for asylum again. It offers our protection to any person who has a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." There are two things to note. First, the way the administration reads those words, Salvadorans must demonstrate that they have been *singled out* for such treatment. As State Department spokesman Alvin Drischler put it, apparently without realizing the cutting irony, most of the Salvadorans we send back "would not face upon return any more danger than is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

faced by their compatriots who never left the country." In other words, since just about everybody is in danger down there, it is difficult for any one individual to demonstrate that he or she has been singled out for special harm. The message to tyrants is clear. Make your atrocities random enough, and spare yourself the embarrassment of having your subjects qualify for asylum in the United States.

But surely many *are* subject to special danger. Abrams concedes as much. "Lord knows, there are such people," he told the House immigration subcommittee. The question is, how do they prove it? This is catch number two. The administration interprets the words "well-founded" to mean a documented legal case. But how many refugees arrive at our borders with a portfolio of internal government or guerrilla documents demonstrating that somebody is out to get them? How would you *begin* to prove the kind of threats that are the daily reality in El Salvador; that, for example, you were dragged off a bus, and almost killed, as befell one young painter, because government soldiers saw the paint on his pants and concluded he had been painting antigovernment slogans?

Even given the administration's niggardly reading of the asylum law—which the words themselves do not seem to require—it is truly remarkable how little effort it has made to find out whether its assumptions about the relative safety of those we deport is in fact the case. Bassin is not the only administration official who has shown little curiosity in this regard. Peter Romero, who until August was the State Department's El Salvador desk officer and who now heads up the administration's efforts to promote its Central American policies to the public, conceded in the same lawsuit that he also had made no effort to ascertain the truth of what the administration claims we already know. "Do you know if any effort has ever been made to determine who are the sorts of people who are the victims [of violence]?" Romero was asked. "No," he replied. "Not by the American government?" The answer was "no" again.

Actually, Romero wasn't being quite fair to his own department. There have been gestures at assembling this information, and Patricia Fagin of the Washington-based Refugee Policy Group was in San Salvador and got a glimpse of it firsthand. "This woman at the embassy had a list of 138 people who had left the U.S.," Fagin recalls. "The list didn't show whether they were deported, or whether they had left 'voluntarily.' For many, the listed address was just a post office box, and for others, it was in an area that was considered dangerous." Regarding the latter, the embassy person said, "I don't intend to go to those." Abrams concedes that the department has made only "ad hoc" efforts to determine the fate of those it is deporting. Why? "Given the pressures on the embassy, all the things it has to do," he replied, "it's a question of how much time they should spend on something we think is ridiculous." In one of the lawsuits mentioned above, the administration actually argued that the court should ignore any

Salvadorans at demonstration and prayer service in Washington, D.C., March 1982.

factual evidence regarding conditions in El Salvador that contradicted what the State Department was discovering through exercises such as these.

Not everyone thinks it "ridiculous" to try to find out what happens to the Salvadorans we deport. But the administration has been making things exceedingly difficult for human rights groups who would like to try to assemble this information on their own. It took the ACLU three years of court battles, for example, to obtain a list of the people we have deported so it could match this list against published reports of deaths there. Without this list, making such a study is exceedingly difficult, since Salvadorans are wary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of providing information that could be taken as a sign of disloyalty. Nevertheless, death accounts in the El Salvador press occasionally mention that the victim had recently returned from the U.S. Such reports suggest that in at least some cases, the dangers facing everybody there are multiplied for those who bear the stigma of having tried to escape.

There was, for example, Santana Chirino Amaya, who lived out an illegal refugee's worst fears. He was stopped for making a wrong turn at a traffic light outside of Washington, D.C., turned over to the INS, and deported. A month later his body was found at a crossroad known locally as the "Road of Death" because of the Salvadoran army that patrols the area. His sister Christina described the scene on a WGBH-TV "Frontline" report entitled *Sanctuary*: "His body had been burned and his legs were tied with steel wire. He was practically naked, with cigarette burns all over his body. And...he had been beheaded."

> The administration has made only halfhearted attempts at finding out what happens to Salvadoran asylum-seekers after we deport them. 'It is a question of how much time [we] should spend on something we think is ridiculous.'

There was also Jose Humberto Santacruz Elias, who was deported on January 15, 1981, and never heard from again. And there was, of course, Jose Hernandez. These were just cases that people stumbled upon in the press. "God knows how many other times the press failed to mention that the person had recently returned from the U.S.," says Amit Pandya of the ACLU's asylum project. Jose Rosales, the former army sergeant, has said that on at least some occasions, deportees are singled out by the authorities at the San Salvador airport. One would think that information such as this would trigger a little concern in anyone who had the slightest inclination for such concern. (Pandya, by the way, suspects that the administration is going to hustle out a new study, to preempt the ACLU's project.)

While the administration says it has simply been enforcing the law regarding the Salvadorans, it seems to be interpreting this law very differently regarding those who seek safety here from other countries. Are conditions in Czechoslovakia, say, or Afghanistan, so much worse than in El Salvador, that we would admit 71 percent and 92 percent, respectively, of those seeking refuge from the former two, while we admit only 2 percent of the asylum seekers from the latter? In 1982 we granted asylum to almost 70 percent of those from the Soviet Union who sought it. Again, are conditions there that much worse than in El Salvador? Or is something else going on here?

Abrams insists that cold warfare has nothing to do with it. "We are not concerned," he told the immigration subcommittee, "with whether the government in question is friendly or unfriendly." But that was not what came through when "Frontline" compared the fate of two asylum seekers, one from Poland and the other from El Salvador. Yarek Hruziwicz was an active member of Solidarity. His asylum application was granted in a week. Luis Dominguez was a leader in El Salvador's aborted land-reform program who was fired in 1980 for criticizing that program and who had received threats from death squads. His asylum application languished for two years, and was turned down. (After the "Frontline" interview, the State Department invited him to resubmit it.) While Salvadorans are expected to produce documented proof of the special dangers confronting them, Hruziwicz recalled that "just my statement and my story was taken as proof." A double standard? "I don't believe that because that's not the way we do it," Abrams said. A reporter then confronted Abrams with an internal INS report confirming that "certain nationalities appear to benefit from presumptive status while others do not," despite a 1980 law that supposedly eliminated such bias.

"I don't care who says it—it's false," was Abrams's reply.

When it is not arguing that Salvadorans can't prove they've been singled out for persecution, the administration has been asserting that the

•1982 Rick Reinhard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vast majority aren't escaping the bloodshed at all. They just want a better life. "It is an old story," Abrams told the Immigration subcommittee. "El Salvador is the most densely populated country in the Western hemisphere, and it has over time had a policy of exporting people to try to relieve its tremendous population density." Or, as an immigration official in Tucson put it, "Sure, El Salvador is a crummy country. So is the South Bronx."

This argument is not to be dismissed out of hand. El Salvador *is* a crowded country. People *were* leaving there before the war. But the administration's harping about "economic refugees" in the context of El Salvador is in large measure a distinction without a difference. One's livelihood, no less than anything else, is often caught up in the hostilities. Perlman, the El Centro attorney, for example, had a client whose father refused to sell his land to a man conected to the army. The father was killed, and the son, who was next in line, fled to this country. An "economic" refugee? (The State Department thought so, and he was deported.) Yes, people do tend to find a better life here. But if we disqualified people on that account, then we would end up admitting virtually nobody at all.

The administration has a host of other arguments. For example, we are told that if all these refugees want is safety, they could find it in countries along the way, such as Honduras—never mind that the refugee camps there have not been safe from attack. Beneath all these tortured arguments is a simple fact. The administration is invested heavily in El Salvador, and it doesn't want to listen to, let alone acknowledge, anything that might raise embarrassing questions about that investment. But merely to let these desperate people in, until the hostilities die down, would not necessarily reflect ill upon our overall policy there. It would merely acknowledge reality. Jose Hernandez, remember, was not fleeing the government or the death squads. He was fleeing the rebel guerrillas. To have granted him asylum would be as much a criticism of those guerrillas, as of the government which could not ensure his safety.

Nor is this merely—if that's the word—a question of humanitarian concern. What the people of this hemisphere think about us is not unrelated to our foreign policy aims, nor to our desire to promote democracy as superior to the Soviet model. Is the administration sending the right message? Luis Dominguez, for example, was asked if he was surprised when his asylum petition was turned down. "Yes," he said, "because you always know that the United States is an example for the democracy and human rights and all that. And when they told you they can't give you political asylum, really, it's a big surprise." To top it all off, we say to such people, and to the rest of the world, "If you come from a communist country, then we let you in. If you don't, sorry. We don't want you." Do we want such people to root for the commies in their own countries? If you are going to have to put up with brutality anyway, why not choose that form of it which would at least give you a chance of getting into the United States?

The administration could be much more generous in granting asylum. But case-by-case is not the way to deal with this crisis. It is like trying to deal with an avalanche by inspecting every rock. The case-by-case approach is also creating massive congestion in our system of immigration justice. The answer is to allow Salvadorans as a group to stay temporarily in our country ("extended voluntary departure") as both houses of Congress have urged the president to do. Abrams replies that granting this status would be a "magnet" for the Salvadoran hordes. Indeed, the spectre of the "feet people" has become a prime argument for the administration's whole El Salvador policy. Ten percent of the Latin American population will swarm to our borders, the State Department warns in a study, if a "loss" in El Salvador sets the dominoes falling. What the department omits to mention is that roughly 10 percent of El Salvador's population has come here already, fleeing not a communist regime, but ones which we ourselves have supported. The hordes are coming now. If we grant them temporary legal asylum, we will at least know who they are. To be sure, to do so would cause us inconvenience. Immigration is always a messy business, especially when it concerns the porous border along the Rio Grande. But a little inconvenience would not necessarily be a bad thing. A *New York Times*/CBS poll taken last year showed that only 25 percent of those questioned even knew that our government was supporting the government in El Salvador. We could use a greater sense of urgency here regarding our policy in that part of the world.

The question that we have to ask is, who is doing more for our stature in this hemisphere: people like Jim Corbett, with his underground railroad for the refugees, or the administration, with its insistence that we should turn these people away? ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEMO OF THE MONTH

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY DEPOT SYSTEM COMMAND
CHAMBERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17201

DRSDS-A

12 August 1983

SUBJECT: Use of DARCOM Theme

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Reference:

a. Message, HQDARCOM, DRCIN-CT, 072200Z Jul 83, DARCOM Theme. (JK 10,095)

b. Message, HQDESCOM, DRSDS-PAO, 251430Z Jul 83, DARCOM Theme. (JK 11,094)

2. Effective immediately, all messages and military letters will contain as the last paragraph of the body the DARCOM theme, "Quality Equipment and Support for an Excellent Army." Examples showing placement are at enclosures 1 and 2.

3. This letter rescinds instructions referring to correspondence contained in reference b.

4. "Quality Equipment and Support for an Excellent Army."

FOR THE COMMANDER:

2 Encl
as

JOHN YURCABA, JR.
LTC, GS
Secretary of the General Staff

DISTRIBUTION:

E

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Culpability

We are all familiar with the cliche that nobody ever corrects a problem until it is too late. King Lear didn't recognize the virtue of his only loving daughter, Cordelia, until after his false daughters, Goneril and Regan, tricked him into giving them his kingdom. Our allies in Europe didn't recognize the threat posed by the Nazis until after Neville Chamberlain made peace with Hitler at Munich. And, to illustrate the principle on a less grandiose scale, every mother knows that a child won't really learn to keep his hand away from the flame until he's felt the burn.

But just because something is a cliche doesn't mean it's always true. In some cases, the human response to a mistake once its repercussions are felt is not to correct the mistake, but to desperately *avoid* correcting it. For the benefit of future anthropologists studying America's litigious late 20th century, we'll call this phenomenon The Culpability Trap.

The Culpability Trap dictates that the worst time to correct a problem is after disaster has struck, because remedial action would show that the disaster could have been averted had you thought to correct the problem beforehand. To acknowledge a problem so conspicuously is to suggest negligence, and thus to open the possibility of bad publicity, or a lawsuit, or both.

Of course, keeping mum isn't always the response of somebody caught in the act of malfeasance. Sometimes a little confession can bring instant absolution. In the late 1970s, for example, the military discovered it had miscalculated the scores on its intelligence tests; when the real scores emerged, it turned out the new recruits were even dumber than originally assumed. The Pentagon went to Congress and came clean. Congress then responded by raising military pay 25 percent across-the-board, in the name of attracting "higher quality."

In general, however, the more serious the negligence, the stronger the bureaucratic urge to avoid any action that risks acknowledging it. There is no shortage of examples. After a huge chunk of Interstate 95 fell into the Mianus River in Connecticut, taking three drivers with it, the Connecticut Department of Transportation did not, as you might expect, call for a drastic alteration of its highway inspection procedures. Instead, it argued that the two inspectors who okayed the Mianus Bridge six months before could not have been expected to observe that anything was amiss.

Then there's the case of Eli Lilly. When the company learned that its new drug, Oraflex, was probably the cause of a number of deaths overseas, it did not withdraw it from the market. Instead, it withheld the information from the Food and Drug Administration and continued to press ahead with efforts to introduce it into the American market.

When Nuclear Regulatory Commission engineers discovered in the 1970s that many of the reactors the commission had approved had serious design flaws, the NRC did not instruct utilities to make the necessary repairs. That would have tacitly acknowledged the NRC's negligence when it approved the designs in the first place. Instead, the NRC crossed its bureaucratic fingers and hoped disaster wouldn't strike. Then came Three Mile Island.

Not all examples involve matters of life and death. Sometimes all that's at stake is a reputation. Take Labor Secretary Ray Marshall's response to the possible exposure of problems in the CETA program in the 1970s. Insiders at Labor saw CETA as a "disaster waiting to be discovered," a former official recalls. But when the

Jack Cloherty is a reporter for WRC-TV in Washington, D.C.

BY JACK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trap

story finally broke, Labor focused its energies on a giant public relations blitz of brochures and films designed to demonstrate what a great job CETA was doing. "Secretary Marshall had hired the guy responsible, and to criticize would be to say Marshall had screwed up," recalls the former official. "So we just decided to ride it out and hope the problems would go away."

Obviously, there can be an upper limit to the magnitude of the unsolved problem in cases like this. If the public is whipped into a frenzy about something, a bureaucrat may have no choice but to resign himself to solving the problem, or risk a public hanging. But the difficulty of recalling very many examples where this has happened in real life makes me suspect that this limit is largely theoretical, even in a democracy.

Malign neglect

I've been thinking about The Culpability Trap ever since I reported a story for WRC-TV, a Washington, D.C., station, about Calvin Steve, a 24-year-old fireman for the District of Columbia who died last November after he was thrown from a moving fire truck. His friends at the firehouse say he might have lived if a standard safety device had been in place on the truck. Soon after Steve's death, Howard Dixon, the deputy chief responsible for the safety of fire "apparatus," was placed on administrative leave. In a world without lawyers, such an action would indicate only that somebody was being punished for doing his job badly. But in the world as ruled by The Culpability Trap, Dixon was punished not for neglecting to place the safety device on the truck, but for installing the safety device *after* the accident—to protect others from injury.

It is clear from the evidence that a little foresight might very well have saved Calvin Steve's life. For months before the accident, the captain

We're told from childhood on that nobody wants to correct a mistake until after disaster has struck. But Deputy Fire Chief Howard Dixon learned that can be the worst time to do it.

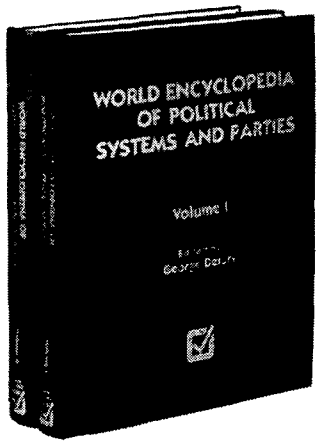
of his engine company had been after the fire department to install "mansaver bars" on the truck from which Steve fell. The mansaver is a padded bar on a hinge that is mounted across the lower entry to the stairwell. A fireman must lift the bar to get to the stairs; it then snaps down and serves as a passive restraint.

The new pumper arrived last spring without any restraining device across the stairwell, so Deputy Chief Dixon installed a chain as a stopgap measure until the mansaver bars arrived. But the chain has a major drawback: the firefighter has to remember to attach it across the stairwell, and in a hurry, he might forget. In the case of Engine 12, the fire department's investigation after the accident found, the chain had become too tangled to reach across the stairwell and clip into place. When Steve fell on November 12, the chain wasn't in use. He died of head injuries on November 23, leaving a wife and three children under the age of three.

The day after Steve's death, I received calls from a couple of firemen I know. They told me that the mansaver bars that might have saved Steve's life were sitting in a firehouse storeroom. They had been delivered soon after the pumper had arrived. When I visited the engine house where Steve had been stationed with a camera crew, I noticed that mansaver bars had been hastily installed on the truck, apparently in reaction

CLOHERTY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND PARTIES

by GEORGE E. DeLURY

"This impressive new work finally provides the depth of information lacking in such widely used reference sources as *Europa Yearbook* or *Political Parties of the World.* It contains political profiles on 169 nations and 8 dependent territories, each written by an expert on that country.... It should receive heavy use in public and academic libraries."—*Library Journal* (12/15/83)

1300 pages in two volumes. 8½ x 11.
$120.00, hardbound.
ISBN 0-87196-574-7

To Order
WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND PARTIES
write to:

Facts On File, Inc.
460 Park Avenue South
New York, N.Y. 10016
attn: Dept. SH, WM 1/84

Add $5.00 for postage and handling charges.
N.Y. and California residents add sales tax.

☐ check or money order enc. ☐ VISA
☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express
Card #_____ Exp. Date_____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip_____

to Steve's death. Later that day I interviewed District Fire Chief Theodore Coleman. In addition to referring to Steve repeatedly as "Stevens," he insisted that the chains were "just as safe as the bars." "Why, then," I asked, "has the chain been taken off and the bar put on?" Coleman seemed stunned. He sputtered for a moment, and then said, "That has not been told to me. I do not have that information."

Deputy Chief Dixon apparently had ordered the bars installed without telling Chief Coleman. Several days later I learned that Dixon had been placed on administrative leave. At first I thought, rather naively, that he was being disciplined because he hadn't had the bars installed when they first arrived. Coleman assured me that wasn't the case, and claimed the action "had nothing at all to do with Steve's death." Dixon's leave was an "internal personnel matter," nothing more.

Later I found out the real reason. Dixon's sin lay in his responding to an order by Assistant Fire Chief Harry Shaffer to install the bars, a violation of the official chain of command, since Assistant Chief Maurice Kilby, not Shaffer, is Dixon's boss. Several high-ranking officials in the department say it would have been unusual for Dixon to consult anyone higher up before making such a routine equipment change; besides, most of the city's fire trucks were already equipped with mansaver bars. Yet Coleman, aside from his embarrassment at being caught flat-footed in a television interview, reportedly was very concerned (along with the fire department's legal counsel) that the installation of the bars after the accident would seem a tacit admission of negligence.

Of course, the District of Columbia government probably will have a lawsuit on its hands anyway because the mansaver bars had been available for months prior to the accident and no one had bothered to install them. That in itself is probably stronger evidence of negligence than Dixon's installation of the mansaver bars after Steve's death.

But never underestimate a bureaucrat's terror of The Culpability Trap. A man who is trying to save lives in the future has been disciplined. A bureaucracy that seems to bear some responsibility for a fireman's death has decided to stonewall it. And a very clear message has been communicated to everyone else in the District of Columbia fire department: It's better to insist you did nothing wrong than to learn from your mistakes. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

Be sure to bring your Cook County voter registration form

The Social Security Administration sent the following note to a woman who had died in September 1982: "Our records show you as deceased. Please come in and verify."

Careful, it's a trick question

According to the *San Jose Mercury News*, the U.S. Postal Service sends a postcard to people who have changed their address that asks them to send it back if the address on the card is incorrect.

It was midnight. There was a sharp rap at the door. 'Profezzor Schmidt?' a thickly-accented voice called out ominously. I clutched my yet-unfinished monograph to my breast...

According to the Seattle *Weekly*, when the University of Washington recently eliminated some faculty positions (leaving teachers the option to be reassigned), its chapter of the American Association of University Professors sent an alarm to its members quoting Pastor Martin Niemoller: "In Germany, they came first for the communists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for me and by that time, there was no one left to speak up."

THE LAW FIRMS OF

DEBEVOISE & LIBERMAN

AND

COOK, PURCELL, HENDERSON & ZORACK

TAKE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THE MERGER OF THEIR PRACTICES. THE MERGED FIRM COMBINES THE PRACTICES OF COOK, PURCELL, HENDERSON & ZORACK, WHICH SPECIALIZES IN LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH ISSUES, AND DEBEVOISE & LIBERMAN, WHICH CONCENTRATES ON FEDERAL REGULATORY, CORPORATE, PUBLIC UTILITY AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MATTERS. THE MERGED FIRM WILL CONDUCT ITS PRACTICE AS FOLLOWS

IN WASHINGTON

BISHOP, LIBERMAN, COOK, PURCELL & REYNOLDS

1200 SEVENTEENTH STREET, N. W.

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036

(202) 857-9800

IN NEW YORK

BISHOP, LIBERMAN & COOK

26 BROADWAY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10004

(212) 248-6900

THOMAS M. DEBEVOISE HAS BECOME COUNSEL TO THE FIRM AND WILL CONTINUE HIS PRACTICE IN WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

JANUARY 1, 1984

If you have trouble finding the lawyer you want, just check our handy 424-page index

And a squad of dentists will be parachuted in shortly

The White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives is making Grenada into a showcase for American voluntarism. It has signed up Mars Inc. to donate 1,300 pounds of Snickers to the Grenadans, while Peter Paul Cadbury is giving 1,000 Almond Joys and an equal number of Mounds bars.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mis-led and Unc
Life in Today's

"Aim High." The slogan used to be "A Great Way of Life," but last year the United States Air Force decided to change it. "We wanted a new emphasis on the increased technology aspect of the modern Air Force," explains Captain Maryellen Jadick, who's in charge of Air Force advertising for an area that includes Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and most of the states of Maryland and Delaware. And that's certainly what most of the radio and television ads emphasize: eager fighter pilots double-checking their electronic instrument panels before slipping the surly bonds of earth; several airmen assembled around a computer print-out; a young black man in headphones peering intently at a radar screen. The themes are unmistakable: excitement, living on the cutting edge of technology, learning a highly marketable skill. "They're beautiful spots," Jadick says. "They've won all kinds of awards."

But not so fast. If the nation must persuade young men and women to serve in uniform, it's only right that it neither mislead them about the work they'll do, nor waste their talents once they've enlisted. Yet that's exactly why the Air Force's commercials, award-winning or not, are so disturbing. A closer look at what that service's 476,000 enlisted personnel actually do reveals that, however much aspiring recruits may strive to "Aim High," most end up landing in some surprising—and disappointing—places.

The Air Force's own figures tell the story. Of last year's 65,000 new recruits, 7,000 are now, well, guarding things. As "security specialists" they keep watch over everything from B-52 bombers to the clubhouse at the base golf course. Another 3,700 are "administrative specialists," performing work that World War II veterans will instantly recognize for having once gone under the title of "clerk." Nearly 2,200 have become "inventory management specialists," performing such chores as ordering supplies and stocking shelves with spare parts. Another 2,000 are "law enforcement specialists," the Air Force's version of policemen.

In addition to these jobs—the top four "career areas" for new enlistees in fiscal year 1983—the Air Force turned 1,200 recruits into "fire protection specialists," more than 1,000 into "vehicle operators," and 840 into "food service specialists." About 800 are "personnel specialists." What do *they* do? "They handle the paperwork for all the transfers, make sure the military record is complete," explains Charles Chandler, the public affairs director for the Air Force's recruiting division. "Oh—and those emergency notification cards. That's very important. They make sure they're in the folder, too."

According to Chandler, most potential recruits aren't interested in these jobs; they prefer "high tech, electronics, working with airplanes." But only eight of the 20 largest career areas for new recruits have more than a passing connection to these vocations. Only 3,000 of last year's 65,000 enlistees became jet engine mechanics or "maintenance specialists" for the Air Force's fleet of bombers and tactical fighters. Competition for many electronics specialties—and only 15 percent of the Air Force's jobs are so classified—is so keen that scoring in the 80th percentile on the Air Force's aptitude and vocational test is almost a prerequisite. And the hardest jobs to get? "I'd say the high-tech, computer jobs," answers Chandler.

Experienced shoppers might detect something familiar in the Air Force's recruiting pitch—a tactic the Better Business Bureau refers to as "bait and switch." In the retail trade, it works like this:

Phillip Keisling is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

er-worked: Air Force

by Phillip Keisling

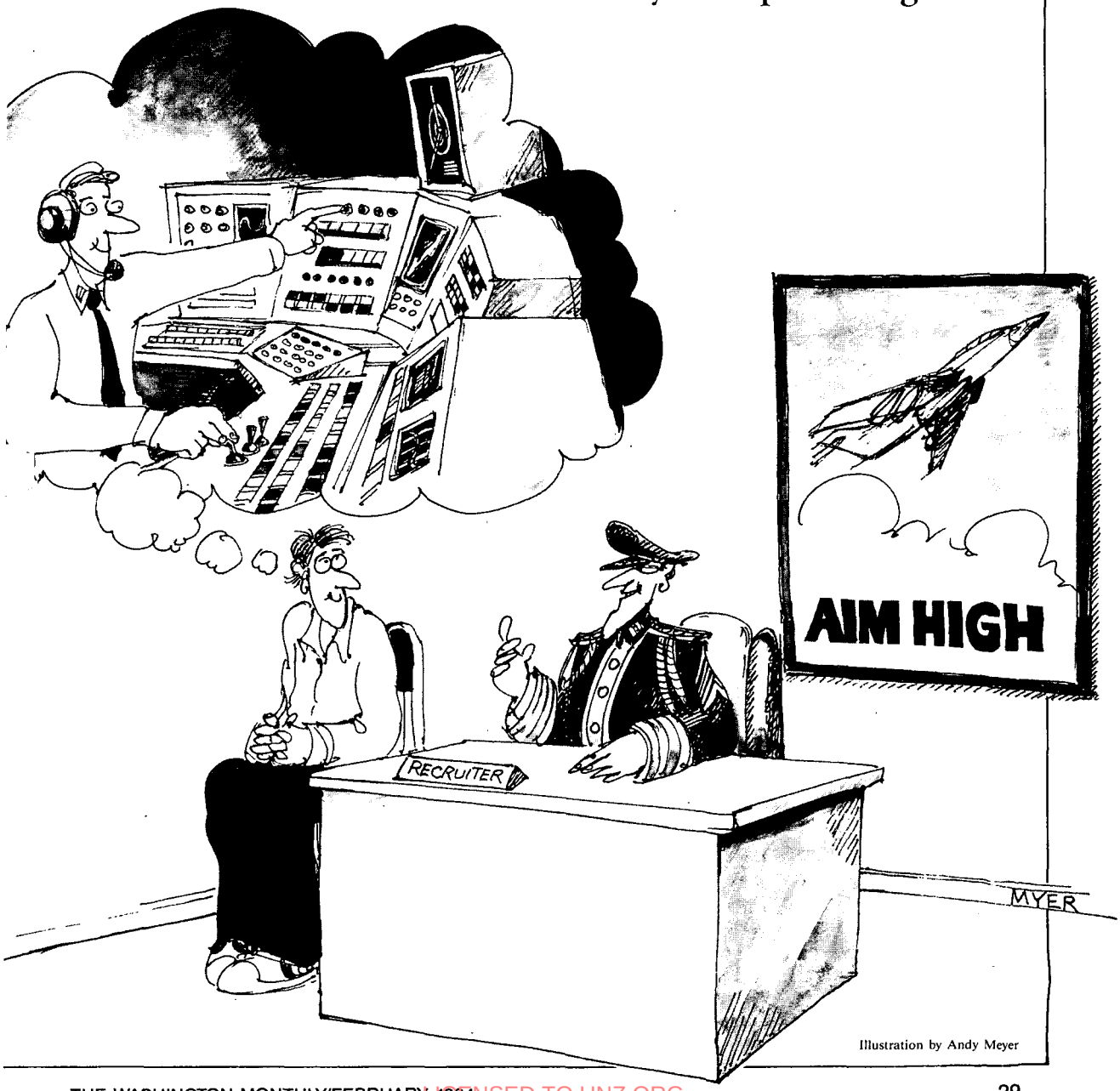


Illustration by Andy Meyer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lefty's House of Discount Appliances advertises a fabulous special—say, a 25-inch color television for just $99. Upon seeing the advertisement, you rush down to the store, only to be told by the salesman—who knows full well the store never had more than two of those sets—that the last one was just carted away by a happy customer. As you start to leave, however, he grabs you by the arm and whispers, "But I've got an even better bargain over here!" Fifteen minutes later you're the proud owner of a combination microwave oven/automatic dishwasher that you're convinced really is a steal at just $899.

The Air Force says it doesn't know how often recruits are placed in their career area of first choice; "that would take at least three weeks to find, if it's even in our computers," Chandler says. But one conclusion is fairly obvious: many of the jobs so invitingly portrayed in the commercials are about as rare as those $99 color television sets.

And many of *those* jobs—in the tradition of most cheap appliances—aren't what they're cracked up to be. Something called "avionics" is the largest high-tech "career field" in the Air Force, employing 30,000 enlisted personnel. The term refers to the interchangeable components—"black boxes"—that control the computer, radar, and communications systems on the Air Force's most modern weapons. But avionics, while making weapons such as the F-15 fighter more sophisticated than the F-4 it succeeded, have also made much maintenance and repair work simpler, just as solid-state technology has made television sets easier to repair. The vast majority of "avionics specialists" do little more than detect a malfunctioning black box and replace it with a good one; only a few are trained to fix the bad ones. Since private employers are usually interested only in those ex-enlisted men with the latter skill, the typical avionics specialist will find the words of Major General Albert G. Roberts, commander of logistics for the Tactical Air Command, somewhat disheartening. Referring recently to the new generation of Air Force planes, Roberts enthused, "They're straight-forward, more honest to fix, and require less technical skill."

Less technical skill? Welcome to the modern Air Force, where more enlisted men provide fire protection and sanitation services than maintain and repair computers, where more serve as "food services specialists" than maintain nuclear missiles, and where the Security Police Academy is, according to a spokesman, "the largest institution of its kind in the free world." One lieutenant colonel in the Air Force describes it this way: "All those recruiting ads, with the planes and the high tech? Well, it's the Air Force's Big Lie. Most people don't deal with that, and even in the high-tech jobs you're not really trained, you're programmed like robots. The people at headquarters know that—after all, they make sure the manuals for these jobs are written so fifth graders can understand them."

The not-so-surprising result is that many airmen find themselves performing work that's somewhat different than what they expected when they first walked into a recruiter's office. An "administrative specialist" at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., recalls, "I wanted to work on computers, but they told me my real aptitude was in administrative work. I spend most of my time typing and filing forms; I could have learned how to do this in a secretarial school." Charles Moskos, a sociologist from Northwestern University whose specialty is enlisted men in the All-Volunteer Force, recently returned from a visit to several Strategic Air Command bases in North Dakota. "Upwards of 20 percent of the people at these bases are security guards," he says. "You have guys patrolling or maybe just sitting in a three-quarter ton truck all night with the heater on, watching a plane on the runway. It's tedious, excruciatingly boring work, and a lot of guys definitely think the recruiters sold them a bill of goods." Moskos adds, "So much for aiming high."

Hush money

It's one thing to have able, competent people joining the Air Force because their childhood dream was to get a chance to stand watch over highly sophisticated weapons. It's quite another to have able, competent security guards who enlisted because they really wanted to work with airplanes. The sin of misleading is further compounded, however, by using people unproductively once they're in their assigned career areas. This not only wastes money and talent, but, over time, breeds a subtle contempt for the system, even among those who like military service.

Having too little real work to divide among too many talented people is one of the modern Air Force's most vexing problems. It perhaps is best exemplified by the Air Force's preference for breaking down its jobs into an almost maddening number of specialties. The Navy, for example, puts its people into about 150 different specialties, assigning them to work on its array of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

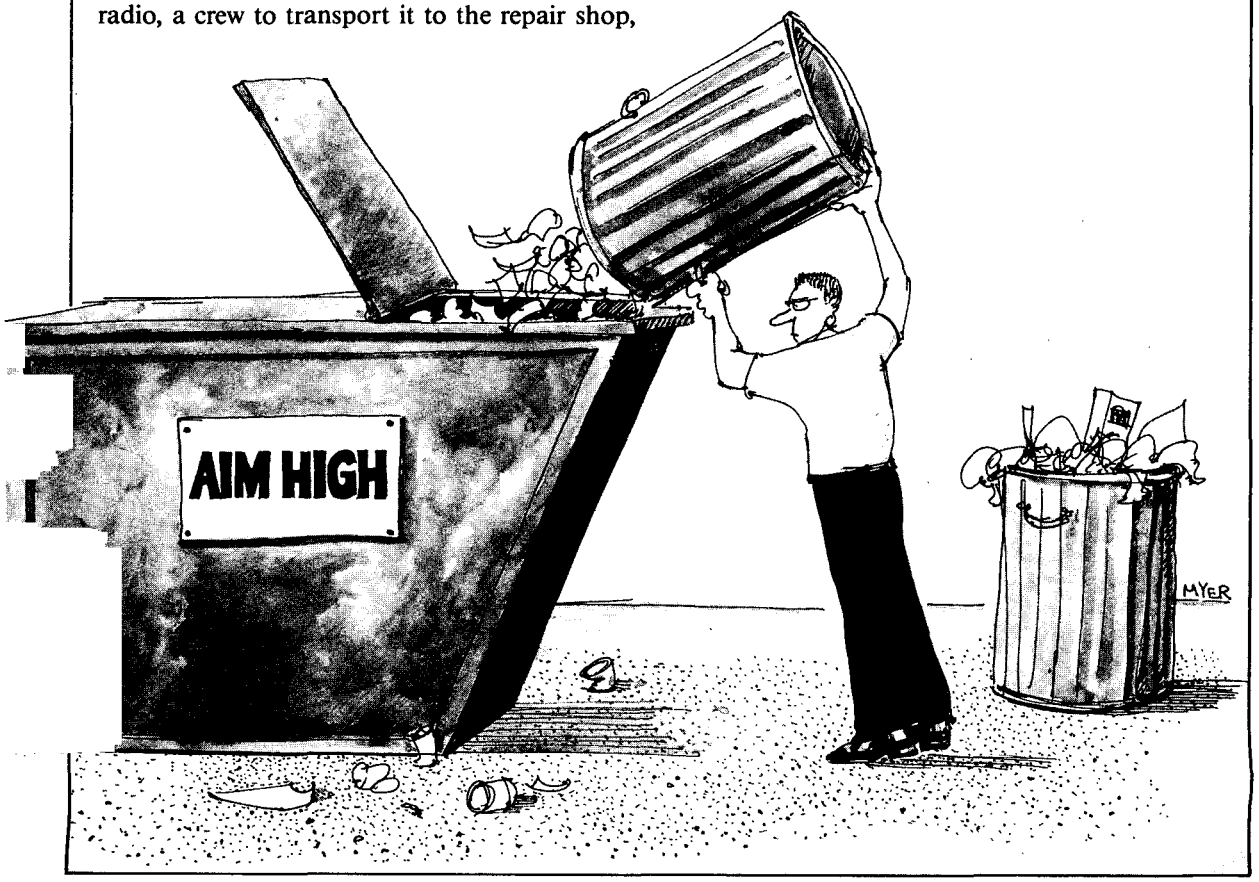
weapons—ships, submarines, carrier-based fighters, reconnaissance planes, helicopters, and nuclear missiles. The Air Force divides its work into more than 350 specialties. Where the Navy typically assigns one generalist to repair several different types of weapons, the Air Force will assign several specialists to one weapon system. The firing system on the F-15 fighter, for example, is tended by hydraulic, radar, and electronics specialists.

One result of this system is to make a job that's dull even more so. Security guards, for example, are occasionally roused from their torpor by a signal from an electronic alarm, which in most cases goes off only because the sensor is malfunctioning. But the security guard is usually not allowed to reset it; that requires an electronics technician to be summoned to the scene.

On the maintenance line, this specialization often results in too many people taking too long to do a given job. One former maintenance officer who's still in the Air Force recalls how for repair of a malfunctioning radio he had to rely on five separate departments: a crew chief to unbolt a few panels, a team of two or three to pull the seat, a crew of electricians to disconnect the radio, a crew to transport it to the repair shop, and another to fix it. "It was craft unionism run amok," he recalled. "In between, you did a lot of waiting around. A four-hour job that ended up taking four days seemed to be the rule, not the exception."

It's also a system designed to frustrate the conscientious employee. Eugene Behr, a technical sergeant in charge of a B-52 jet engine testing cell at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, has been in the Air Force for 16 years. "The younger noncommissioned officers really have this attitude of 'I'm trained in electronics; I don't do nuts and bolts.' " The result, Behr says with annoyance, "is to slow things down to a 'get-along' pace—like a trot on a horse. It's just a lazy, peaceful day type of thing. If the plane takes off on time, great. If it doesn't, that's great too."

Indeed, behind the appearance of seemingly purposeful activity at a typical Air Force base, former and current airmen attest to a pace of work that's considerably less than vigorous. Bill Fendley, for example, served one term in the Air Force as an operator of flight simulators used by pilots. He recalls how he sometimes worked a six-hour day, which "absolutely staggered" the career



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people in his midst. "They told me they were used to working two, three hours a day," he says. The Air Force gave Fendley nine months of training in how to maintain and repair the simulators. But as a simulator instructor he wasn't allowed to do such work; instead, he had to summon a maintenance crew, which usually consisted of three to five people. He adds, "The boredom was just unbelievable most days; we developed some of the most proficient ping-pong players in the state of Texas."

Another former airman recalls how he was fortunate enough to land a job operating computers. But the luck ended there; he worked in the Strategic Air Command's underground complex at Cheyenne Mountain, spending 15 minutes at the beginning and end of each day checking to see if the computer program was functioning properly. "In between, I tried to keep busy," he recalls. "It was terrible; I remember going through a backgammon phase when I just couldn't read another magazine."

Most enlisted men have more to do all day than thumb through magazines. But keeping busy is hardly the same as doing useful work. As a division manager for Search and Recruit International, a Virginia firm that specializes in finding former enlisted men jobs with high-tech companies, Kevin Beale has quizzed hundreds of former airmen about their work during their term of service. "I've never heard one guy complain about working too many hours," he says. "In fact, I got the impression that a lot of them had about four hours of real work a day." Sometimes even less. Sid Taylor, now research director for the National Taxpayers Union, retired from a civil service job with the Air Force. One manpower study he worked on turned up an enlisted man assigned the task of building five birdhouses a month for "morale purposes." "He was building five a month, so the Air Force said he was 100 percent efficient," Taylor says.

Air Force officials respond to suggestions of make-work and featherbedding in several ways. First, they deny the charge, pointing to their own manpower studies that show the Air Force needs 90,000 additional people by 1988. Secondly, the Pentagon claims that a little slack in the system is preferable in peacetime; if the Soviets were to launch a full-fledged assault on Western Europe, it would be better to have too many people ready to respond than too few. It's also pointed out that Air Force personnel are subject to special requirements usually not applicable to civilians, such as being on alert 24 hours a day, having little choice but to work where and when the boss orders, and getting no additional pay for overtime.

There's some merit to each argument—but far less than is initially apparent. It is hardly surprising the Air Force's own studies justify its present use of people and its future needs. And as one Air Force colonel whose command has been subjected to such studies observes, "No one ever seemed to ask the fundamental questions, like 'Should your organization be doing this work at all?' " The need for "surge" capacity to meet a sudden threat has some plausibility, but if it applies to of all the services, it applies to the Air Force least; the number of Air Force personnel is supposedly tied to the number of planes, many of which presumably would be lost in the early days of an all-out war.

As for the extra demands, a retired chief master sergeant—the highest enlisted rank in the military—who now lobbies Congress on behalf of retired enlistees, comments, "I can understand why the general populace gets a little tired of listening to Air Force people go on and on about the long hours and alert duties. Sure there are guys who work the flight line for 12 hours a day. But then there's comp time; they get off early the next day. And they know how to work the system—they may work overtime three days so they can get a four-day weekend."

A survey of 54,000 military personnel conducted in 1978 and 1979 by the Rand Corporation confirms this. Air Force enlisted personnel in the middle ranks reported that they worked 30 to 32 regular hours a week. What did they do with their large blocks of free time? About 20 percent of them admitted they held second jobs. Almost 8 percent of the technical sergeants—a rank usually attained by the tenth year of service—said their moonlighting consumed more than 20 hours a week.

The reluctance of the chief master sergeant to speak for the record is not unusual; there are good reasons enlisted men in uniform or those lobbying on their behalf don't speak out much about the widespread misuse of people's time. One is the fear that superior officers will punish them for their candor. Another is that many servicemen don't really want challenging work, high-tech or otherwise, and the Air Force obligingly accommodates them. Those recruits who've always had a yearning to play the tuba will doubtless be glad to know today's Air Force has 1,100 slots reserved for the career field "band."

But there's a bigger reason for the general

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

silence of those enlisted men who've found their visions of working on state-of-the-art fighters transformed into early-morning patrols around the perimeter of a supply depot. To put it somewhat crudely, the Air Force manages to maintain silence among most of its enlisted men with a simple strategy: bribing. As one security guard at a SAC base in North Dakota puts it, "The job's lousy, but I have to admit I'm probably overpaid. How much could I expect to get on the outside for doing this kind of work?"

The answer—the minimum wage—works out to a lot less than what the Air Force will pay. One of the most persistent myths about the modern military is that its members are paid starvation wages; a Youth Tracking Survey conducted by the military recently found that 37 percent of potential recruits thought beginning pay was less than $75 a month. The first day an enlistee joins the Air Force, his pay is more than seven times that—$573 a month to be exact, which doesn't include free room and board, or generous tax-free allowances for food and housing if he lives off-base.

The working conditions provide further consolation. The Air Force has a well-deserved reputation of offering the most comfortable billets in the military: most of the work is indoors, 80 percent of the jobs are in the continental United States, and even those who make the Air Force a career rarely spend more than a year separated from their family. From the beginning of his service, the airman also gets used to regular working hours. He is not asked to perform guard duty—that's now a career field—nor is he subjected to that traditional bane of the serviceman who's low on the totem pole: kitchen police. K-P, which has never been widespread in the Air Force, has vanished, save for an occasional stint during the six weeks of basic training that every airman receives. It now goes by the more refined title of "mess attendant duty."

Then there are the benefits available to all military personnel. There's a full month's paid vacation every year in addition to regular national holidays; and like many union members and civil servants, airmen observe United Nations Day on the fourth Monday in October. Most personnel have access to a commissary, where they can buy groceries, appliances, and other goods at discounts of at least 25 percent.

By the end of his first four-year term, when the airman is typically 23 years old and a sergeant, his annual compensation will exceed $15,000, including the value of his housing and subsistence allowances. If married, an additional $1,000 in housing allowance is provided, regardless of whether or not the spouse works. (Almost 10 percent of enlisted personnel are now women.) Those who decide to remain in the military can expect to make about $30,000 by the time they're eligible for early retirement after 20 years, an option most exercise—the average age of retiring enlisted personnel is 39 years. It's not exactly what a Wall Street lawyer would expect, but it's an enticing enough package that last year, more than 70 percent of all first-term airmen reenlisted, far more than the Air Force had planned for.

Those who make the Air Force a career are provided with additional reasons for not complaining. By definition, those who decide they want to stay in the military are generally satisfied with it. Few feel inclined to protest obvious signs of waste, much less ones that make their own jobs easier. "I've got a wife, three kids, and a mortgage," observes one master sergeant. "I'm paid well, and I want to put in my 20 years and retire." They also know not to complain about the less-than-diligent working habits of superiors. Taylor recalls one Air Force colonel he worked with in the Pentagon who was dubbed "Handball Harp." He says, "From 11 to 2 every day he'd be down on the court; he'd come back all tired and flushed and red in the face and fall asleep in meetings. But it was dangerous to criticize him; besides, they always said, 'Physical training is part of the Air Force's mission.' "

Quality for the Taking

Yet wasting money is not the biggest expense of luring people into the Air Force under misleading pretenses, and then giving them too little to do. The real damage that's done lies in compromising the excellence of our entire military force, in a manner that at first glance seems quite paradoxical. The commercials and the relative comforts of Air Force life have proved *too* alluring; as a result, the Air Force now enjoys a disproportionate share of the high quality recruits for which all the military services must compete.

The military gauges "quality" on the basis of a battery of intelligence and aptitude tests, the most basic of which is something called the Armed Forces Qualifying Test. The AFQT, the military's equivalent of the SAT test, divides recruits into five categories of intelligence. Of last year's Air Force enlistees, 50 percent—compared

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to only 35 percent of the rest of the population—scored in the two highest categories, I and II. At the low end of the scale, only 2 percent—compared to 30 percent of the rest of the population—scored in categories IV and V. "We've never seen such extremely high quality," enthuses Lieutenant Colonel Dee Miller, who commands the recruiting squadron that covers the Washington D.C. area. "Sometimes my colleagues and I shake our heads and say, 'Boy, we're lucky we got in when we did, because we couldn't if we applied today.' "

Common sense suggests there's a danger in *too much* quality; bored enlisted men who harbor deep resentments about being steered into a dull job can create morale problems for the entire unit. "That's something we're definitely watching for," Chandler says. But if memos are circulating inside the Pentagon, or studies being conducted to determine if the Air Force now has too much of a good thing, they've yet to be made public. The "right" amount of quality still seems to be as much as the Air Force can get. As G. Thomas Sicilia, the Pentagon's director of Accessions Policy, remarks, "All the services tend to ask for x percent quality, and when you ask why, they just say it's because they had x-minus 1 percent last year."

Even so, it would obviously be unrealistic—if not self-defeating—to ask the Air Force to compromise its search for excellence in its recruiting efforts. Good organizations always put a priority on getting the best people. There's also the matter of institutional self-interest. The day the Air Force unilaterally lowers its standards, or reduces pay and benefits to deliberately steer people to the Army or the Marines, will be the day its top brass abandons the MX missile and concedes that the Navy's submarine force is a better nuclear deterrent.

But the analogy to the MX is an apt one; just as nuclear policy should be based on overall strategic needs, so should the use of able, competent people be based on the needs of the en-

The Making of Make-Work

Why does the Air Force have too little work for too many people? "A general has an almost pathological urge to command," one Air Force colonel observes, readily conceding that this bureaucratic urge extends to colonels as well, though usually in somewhat more subdued form.

Indeed, officers in today's Air Force seem hard-pressed to find something to command besides each other. In 1945, for example, the Air Force had 2.4 million men, 72,000 planes, and 298 generals. In 1958, a more representative peacetime year, the Air Force had 858,000 people in uniform, 27,000 aircraft—and 418 generals, or one per 64 planes. The number of generals has since dropped to about 340, but the number of planes has plummeted to 7,200; today, one general is responsible for an average of 21 aircraft.

The bloat is even worse in the less-noticed middle ranks. In 1945 there were just 7,225 lieutenant colonels, a rank most officers reach by retirement. Today there are 12,500 lieutenant colonels, helping to manage a force that has one-fourth the number of people and one-tenth the number of planes.

The explanation that Air Force officials prefer is that their increasingly complex and sophisticated mission requires officers of greater experience and rank. That argument is not wholly without merit, given the Air Force's responsibility for much of our nuclear arsenal and its world-wide obligations. But a much better explanation lies in the deep-seated instinct of military bureaucrats to protect and justify existing postions. During an emergency, such as a war, the number of slots expands to meet the perceived threat. But once the threat subsides, many of the ostensibly unnecessary slots linger on. Each now has someone occupying it, and those of lower rank know that promotions come faster with more slots. So those within the bureaucracy get to work creating new missions and responsibilities.

One obvious result is the glorification of the trivial and the pursuit of new ways to pass the time. In 1958, for example, the commander of the Air Force Accounting and Finance Center in Denver was a colonel. The AFAFC still has the same, relatively simple task of disbursing monthly checks to all active and retired personnel; if anything, the job has gotten easier with the advent of data processing equipment. But by Air Force standards, the job now requires the expertise of a two-star general. Another way to keep restless officers busy is to send them to school; 42 percent of all Air Force officers now have master's degress or Ph.D.s.

Another strategy is assigning too many people to one job. For example, only officers can become pilots, and only 20,000 of the Air Force's 100,000 hold this job. But with only 7,200 planes, the main complaint of pilots seems to be having too little time to fly. An F-15 fighter pilot typically shares his plane with two or three others, with each flying about 15 hours every month. The rest of the month is divided among flight simulators, classroom instruction, and other duty. "Can you imagine Chuck Yeager having to be a snack bar officer?" says one former pilot, who happens to have been one.

There's a price to be paid for managerial bloat. A 27-year-old captain typically earns the equivalent of about $25,000 a year in pay and tax-free allowances;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tire military. And since quality matters far more in a war than in peace, it's vital that the best fighters be placed where they can make a difference—not behind a Xerox machine, photocopying the previous day's casualty reports.

Yet, to an alarming extent, that's exactly where far too many of them are right now. In a conventional war—the kind of war we should expect and be prepared for because it's the only kind we've ever fought—the most important jobs are on the front lines. That includes tank commanders, soldiers and NCOs in rifle squads, artillery gunners, first lieutenants who lead the assaults on the beaches. "Perhaps the most unnatural act in the world is to convince yourself and your men to move out of the relative comfort of the foxhole and charge into enemy fire," observes one retired Army colonel. Yet it is just such unnatural acts, multiplied thousands of times over, on which battles and wars have turned.

Who should be put in the rifle platoons and tank battalions? Here it's worth taking a look at the personnel policies of what is arguably the best trained and effective military of its size in the world: Israel's. All Israeli officers are selected from the enlisted ranks, and the idea of new recruits selecting a "career field" is completely foreign. But most important, Israel deliberately assigns those who score highest on its battery of intelligence and leadership tests to combat specialties. Intelligence obviously isn't an automatic guide to performance in battle, but by and large, Israel has found that the higher the scores, the better the performance under fire. Indeed, studies of battlefield behavior conducted after World War II by the U.S. military reached similar conclusions. But we no longer make assignments on that basis; as Colonel Reuven Gal, one of the Israeli military's chief psychologists, observes, "It's now the reverse here in America. People with the high intelligence go for the more sophisticated jobs, like electronics, and those with the low levels go into combat jobs.

---

a 39-year-old lieutenant colonel, more than $45,000. But aside from money, having too many people often compromises the Air Force's ability to effectively perform its most basic functions.

Take aircraft maintenance. There are usually 24 planes in a squadron, and three squadrons to a wing. During the 1950s, responsibility for maintaining airplanes rested largely with the enlisted crew chief on the squadron level. But right before the Vietnam war, the system was centralized for "greater efficiency." Maintenance responsibility was elevated to the wing level.

"The whole idea was to reduce the number of people," explains a lieutenant colonel who once commanded a maintenance unit. "But actually, it just increased the number of people." Why? At the squadron level, a major typically commanded maintenance operations; at the wing level, lieutenant colonels, then colonels, began moving into the position. And the higher the rank, the greater the expectations about subordinates. "So they created a lot of new slots," the lieutenant colonel explains. "Quality control officers, with enlisted men under them, safety officers—all these people looking over someone's shoulder at the few doing the work."

During the Vietnam war, when the Air Force had to get serious about keeping its combat planes in good repair, the Air Force reverted to its old system. "Maintenance people could react faster; the bureaucracy just said 'Fix it' and you moved," says the officer, who flew an F-4. And after the war? "They went right back to wing maintenance so the officers could get their old jobs back."

To be fair, the Tactical Air Command—recently restored some of the lost authority to squadrons, largely to remedy its abysmal record of keeping planes combat-ready. "Everyone fought the change at first, even me, but it's made a world of difference," says a chief master sergeant who now supervises a squadron of F-15 fighters. The result is quicker, more efficient maintenance, he says. But only TAC has made the change; the Strategic Air Command and the Military Airlift Command—which consist largely of B-52 bombers and cargo planes, respectively—have kept the old system intact. More to the point, TAC's change has had a predictable effect on the number of slots for maintenance officers—none.

Indeed, the slot-seeking bureaucrat knows that crisis is often opportunity, as illustrated by a final example involving the Air Force Systems Command. The AFSC, which has nearly 30,000 military personnel, is responsible for procuring and testing all new weapons. It has come under heavy criticism recently for a variety of sins, including a nagging propensity to spend its money on new airplanes while old ones are rendered idle because too few spare parts were ordered. In a recent interview with *Newsday*, Robert T. Marsh, the four-star general who commands AFSC, generously conceded that there had been a problem. But did he suggest punishing or replacing those procurement officers who hadn't done their job? Not at all. "The problem," Marsh noted soberly, was "going to take more resources on our part—more people, really."

—P.K.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is what happens when you regard military service as an occupation." Gal adds, "The problem is, what will motivate the soldier to fight when it comes to going into combat?"

This is exactly why the Air Force's surplus of high-quality people should be of such concern. Volunteering for a unit that might someday find itself faced with the necessity of charging an enemy machine gun, much less actually committing that act, is hardly a decision reflecting enlightened self-interest. Yet the very lodestar of the All Volunteer Force is just that, a message that starts with the recruiting ads themselves, from "Aim High," to the Army's "Be All You Can Be." Volunteers are encouraged to choose the career field *they* want, and the training *they* think will do them the most good later in life. And though a few combat jobs have sufficient prestige to attract high-quality people—Air Force fighter pilots actually being a good example—in general, the military has found that it must pay large bonuses—again, bribes really—to convince people to take those jobs that would be most critical in a war. That shouldn't be surprising with an all volunteer force; it doesn't take a military psychologist to tell you that most people prefer a pleasant, 9-to-5 job to a nine-month tour of duty on an aircraft carrier or combat maneuvers in the Mojave desert.

The result is that those people whom the military considers of highest quality gravitate to the jobs that are interesting, comfortable, or both. This has meant a preference for the Air Force in general, and noncombat and high-technology jobs in particular. How pronounced is this tendency? In March 1983 the Pentagon actually boasted to Congress that of the Army's noncommissioned officers in combat arms, "only" 60 percent were now drawn from "below-average" categories of intelligence. For the Marines, the figure was "only" 66 percent. "This is a definite improvement over previous years," testified Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb.

The Draft's The Thing

This problem will continue as long as the services compete against one another for available recruits, and as long as one of the main inducements to service is giving those who score highest on tests the most choice in selecting a career field. There is only one way to redress the problem that is so graphically illustrated by the Air Force's "success" in attracting quality people, and its tendency to then misuse and squander their talents.

That solution is the reinstitution of a fair and equitable peacetime draft. The most obvious advantage of a draft is, of course, the savings that will result from not having to pay new recruits such high wages. Conscripts would be given room and board and paid a reasonable sum, say $200 a month, for expenses. For the whole military, savings in pay and benefits alone would be several billion dollars a year, money that could be better used for necessary spare parts and weapons. But even greater savings would be realized by readjusting the pay scales of careerists, which have climbed in step with the dramatic increases for first-term volunteers. Senior enlisted personnel now make six times what those of the same rank made in 1964, and officers make almost five times as much; in the same period, the cost of living has tripled.

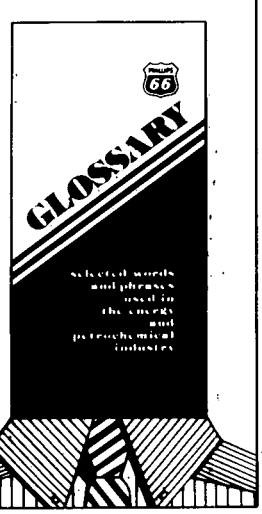
Perhaps the greatest savings would be realized by the wholesale consolidation of jobs. Many jobs such as guard duty, food service, fire protection, and runway repairs could be easily shared among conscripts. The presence of so many peo-

Meet our latest information specialist.

GET YOUR OWN COPY NOW.

Write or Call: Phillips Petroleum Company, Public Relations, 16 Phillips Bldg., Bartlesville, OK 74004. (918) 661-1215

Additional Copies Available in Limited Quantities



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ple serving involuntarily, and at relatively low wages, would also put pressure on the Air Force to consolidate many of its specialties. Most conscripts would want to make their time pass as quickly, and be as worthwhile, as possible. Rather than wanting make-work jobs, they'll want to be given enough broad responsibility that the skills they acquire will be truly useful once they leave. It's worth noting that Israel's Air Force, which has one-sixth the number of combat planes, also has one-20th the number of people in uniform. "We break the jobs down into much larger units," says Gal, "and it's not unusual for people to put in 16-hour days if they're needed."

But most important for the nation's defense in a time of emergency, a draft will allow the military to assign people based on its own needs, rather than individual preferences. The Air Force would have to justify why it needed a Category II recruit as a radio operator more than the Army needed him as a rifleman. No doubt commanders would still inflate their job requirements, and each service would continue to fight for as much quality as it could. But at least the decisions would be made with the needs of the entire force in mind. Gone would be the commercials, misleading and otherwise, and diminished would be the tendency to use people badly. It would be much harder for the military to keep its misuse of personnel hidden from the public, silently acknowledged but unpublicized among well-paid careerists. Civilian ranks at all levels would contain people who knew what military life was really like.

With recruiters having so much success, it may seem like the worst of times to propose a revival of the draft. But there's actually no better time. Recruiting will become much more difficult in the years ahead—the traditional recruiting pool of 18-year-olds will decrease by 20 percent in the next decade—and the pressure will only intensify among the services to try to maintain the quality they're now enjoying. The advertisements will no doubt get slicker, and the pay and benefits will increase accordingly, both to keep people in, and then to keep them quiet.

The draft addresses all these problems, as well as reestablishes the principle that the defense of the country is something that should be equally shared among all classes of citizens. But most of all, it promises to give us a military that's still filled with qualified, highly trained, and patriotic men and women—but a military that, when put to the test of war, stands a much greater chance of meeting it. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for November 1983 is presented to

Fred Barnes
Baltimore Sun

In a four-part series about federal subsidies to the sugar industry, Barnes explores a complex subject with insight and original reporting. When world prices began to undercut the federally mandated price floor for sugar soon after it was implemented in 1981, the Reagan administration introduced import quotas, which had the effect not only of further undercutting its commitment to free-market economics but also harmed the countries that it tried to help through its Caribbean Basin initiative. Price supports have also led to a boom in the manufacture of a high-fructose corn syrup that is rapidly replacing sugar in soft drinks and canned products. But Barnes is not insensitive to those who see their livelihood as being dependent on having a reasonable floor under the volatile prices of commodities like sugar.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper or magazine article (or series of articles) on our political system. Nominations from any newspaper or magazine in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for articles published in January will be announced in the April issue. Nominations will close February 15. Nominations should be accompanied by two copies of the article or articles.

Volunteers

We need you. If you live in the Washington, D.C., area and would like to volunteer at our office, let us know. We need help with typing, stuffing envelopes, proofreading, paste-up, and circulation work. If you're interested, drop us a note telling us the kind of work you're interested in, your experience, and the days and hours you're available each week. Send it to:

Carol Trueblood, The Washington Monthly
1711 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHO'S WHO in the Administration

The undersecretary of travel and tourism is a $64,800-a-year job, the holder of which is supposed to help attract foreign tourists and encourage travel here at home. The last undersecretary was a Los Angeles art dealer who had been **Nancy Reagan**'s chief of staff, and when he left, there was a hue and cry among Senate Republicans to get someone with professional experience for the post. Now Mr. Reagan has chosen **Donna F. Tuttle**, whose professional experience includes sales, teaching, real estate, and interior design. Mrs. Tuttle is also daughter-in-law of **Holmes Tuttle**, the big L.A. car dealer and longtime member of the Reagan kitchen cabinet. It's a "recess appointment," made while Congress was out of session, so Mrs. Tuttle can keep the job for almost a year without congressional approval....

Speaking of Nancy Reagan, her transformation from Marie Antoinette to Little Sister of the Poor is not quite complete. Or, to be more precise, it is complete for purposes of her public appearances, at which small black children are frequently photographed as kissing companions. In private, however, the first lady continues to see the old Versailles gang, including favored escort **Jerry Zipkin**, who was an unpublicized guest at both **William F. Buckley**'s dinner party and the New Year's party at the **Annenbergs**'s....

In the inner sanctums of the White House, Transportation Secretary **Elizabeth Dole** is regarded as first-rate, a view shared by many who have observed her on the job as well. The same is not said, however, of one of Mrs. Dole's colleagues in the Reagan Cabinet, Health and Human Services chief **Margaret Heckler**, whom the White House considers a "modified limited disaster" and a "flake"...

Those who want some significant reform of our Social Security system, including a means test, are rooting for **Michael Boskin**, who now teaches the economics of public finance at Stanford. It is rumored that Boskin, who favors gearing Social Security payments to the recipient's need, will be elevated from his present status as adviser to the administration to a position of real power. We hope the rumor is true....

Conservatives like Ronald Reagan tend to imagine Washington as full of agencies where people don't work awfully hard. Too often, what they imagine turns out to be true. But two exceptions are the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency, where there is a degree of dedication that is considerably above average. But instead of being grateful to these employees, the administration has betrayed them with leadership ranging from the lackluster to the perverse. CPSC Chairman **Nancy Steorts** is a lightweight who too often sides with industry lobbyists. New EPA Chairman **William Ruckleshaus** is an improvement over **Anne Burford**, and has at least taken the shame out of serving at the agency. But he's too much a captive of the White House and the OMB to reignite the esprit one used to find there. For example, while he has sought some increases in his hazardous wastes enforcement staff, it's just a small fraction of what is needed....

In

DEFENSE
Deputy Secretary—**William H. Taft IV** has been general counsel for the department.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
Assistant Secretary for Housing—**Maurice Lee Barksdale** has been deputy assistant secretary for multifamily housing projects.

INTERIOR
Undersecretary—**Ann Dore McLaughlin** has been assistant secretary for public affairs at the Treasury Department.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science—**Robert N. Broadbent** has been commissioner of the bureau of reclamation.

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management—**Garrey E. Carruthers** has been assistant secretary for land and water resources.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS
Director of Superfund, Environmental Protection Agency—**Cora F. Beebe** has been assistant secretary for administration at the Treasury Department.

Chairman, Federal Election Commission—**Lee Ann Elliott** has been vice chairman.

Out

DEFENSE
Deputy Secretary—**W. Paul Thayer** has resigned to fight planned Security Exchange Commission charges involving past business dealings.

INTERIOR
Undersecretary—**J.J. Simmons** is expected to be nominated to a position at the International Communications Commission.

Assistant Secretary of Energy and Minerals—**William P. Pendley** will serve temporarily as a special assistant to the secretary.

JUSTICE
Assistant Attorney General for Legal Policy—**Jonathan C. Rose** is resigning to return to a Washington, D.C., law firm.

TREASURY
Assistant Secretary for International Affairs—**Marc E. Leland** is resigning to work on the Reagan reelection campaign.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Big Massage

How the idea of the sixties takes the politics out of the eighties

Seventy-six million Americans were born during the baby boom that lasted from 1946 to 1964. Technically, these children of postwar prosperity, who comprise roughly a third of the population, might be categorized as one, very big generation. But any amateur sociologist will tell you that the people my older brother went to college with in the late sixties were different from the people I went to college with in the late seventies. The children of the sixties were widely noted for their commitment to social change, a commitment that created strong bonds of generational identity among them. My peers, on the other hand, appeared on the scene when idealism had reached its nadir, an embarrassing circumstance that has made us generally unwilling to be categorized as a social group at all. Most of us would rather label ourselves by other means—geography, race, profession—than admit our affiliation with the Me Decade.

Although some might say this makes us the generational equivalent of an Uncle Tom or a self-hating Jew, I think that our collective invisibility is a healthy thing. America is, after all, already filled with a confusing array of subcultures; why would anyone want to add to the roster a group that, for no discernable reason, loudly proclaimed the cultural identity of everyone between the ages of 19 and 28?

Needless to say, mine is a very different attitude from that of most members of the sixties generation, whose ties to each other remain deeply felt long after the sit-ins and protest marches have subsided. The widespread political activism that created this solidarity may have passed, but the Woodstock generation will go to its grave with a sense that it is special. And indeed, even those of us who weren't invited to the party must concede that there was something unique about the sixties. The intensely felt experience of either opposing or fighting in the Vietnam war, the exuberant optimism among those who wanted to create racial and economic equality, and the general feeling of high-spirited nonconformity all served to define a group of people whose common values set them apart from and—at their best—above the narcissism and grim conformity of the 1950s and the 1970s.

But now that the sixties are over and the members of that generation are looking toward middle age, the bonds that remain among them have taken on an unattractive quality that sometimes makes me glad I *wasn't* invited to the party. For too many veterans of that decade, the litmus test of political idealism—and, in a larger sense, virtue—has come to be not what you do, or even what you believe, but when you were born. In this view, the Woodstock generation doesn't have to grapple with the issues of today's larger political community because, unlike the benighted souls who came before and after, it earned its stripes in the political battles of the sixties. This sustains a feeling of commitment that is curiously apolitical. The idea seems to be that if the world doesn't seem a much better place now that the college students of the sixties have assumed adult responsibilities, then, dammit, it's the world's fault, or perhaps the fault

Timothy Noah is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

BY TIMOTHY NOAH

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of adulthood itself. It certainly isn't theirs. And if the children of the sixties don't like the world as they now find it, then the answer the generational view sets forth is not to make it better; rather, it is to retreat to the companionship of one's fellow 35-year-olds, among whom can be found a smaller, more exclusive society where some of the old attitudes and customs still reign. As the advertisements for the movie *The Big Chill* put it, "In a cold world you need your friends to keep you warm."

Is Mr. Coffee immoral?

It's no accident that the spirit of the Woodstock generation is so aptly articulated on posters advertising *The Big Chill*: increasingly, that generation's attempts at self-definition have come less and less through politics and more and more through popular culture. Movies like *The Big Chill* and *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*, books like Ann Beattie's *Chilly Scenes of Winter* and *Falling in Place*, and plays like Michael Weller's *Loose Ends* have chronicled the growing disillusion of the children of the sixties as they make their way through the cruelly pragmatic seventies and eighties. One idea most of these depictions share—an idea that comes across with particular clarity in *The Big Chill*—is that the possibility for social change is a thing of the past.

The Big Chill is about a group of former sixties types who gather for a weekend to mourn their friend Alex, who has committed suicide and who serves as a sort of symbol of the lost ideals of the sixties. (Among the few facts we learn about Alex are that he was a brilliant physics student, that he turned down a prestigious fellowship after he graduated for vaguely ideological reasons, and that he spent the rest of his life drifting on the fringes of society while his friends ascended to the professional class.) "Where did Alex's hope go?" asks the minister at the funeral. Harold, an athletic shoe tycoon (his chain is whimsically called "Running Dog"), answers the question in a way that we're supposed to find poignant, but which struck me as vain and cynical: "There was something about Alex that was too good for this world."

The idea that sixties-style idealism is "too good for this world" is the central theme of the movie. As we are introduced to each of the rest of the characters, we see this theme illustrated. There's Meg, the former public defender who is now working for a real estate law firm. ("Their clients were only raping the land," she explains. "And there was, of course, the money.") There's Michael, who gave up teaching in Harlem to write for *People* magazine. Sam is now the lead character on a "Magnum P.I."-like TV show. Harold and Sarah are the prototypical two-professional family: he has his shoe stores, she's a doctor. Karen married a square advertising man. The only character who hasn't acquired a stake in the system is Nick, an embittered, impotent Vietnam veteran and drug dealer who seems to be the film's one clumsy stab at complexity. Even Nick, however, illustrates the film's central theme: by choosing to be a dropout, as Alex was, he seems to be affirming that today's world is inherently polluting.

The idea that the idealism of the Woodstock era is unattainable in the chilly 1980s has an appealingly elegiac ring to it, but it is refuted by the existence of people in our midst who still maintain a realistic belief that they can change the world. Unhappily, most of them seem to be on the right these days, but those who remain true to the ideals of the sixties have justifiably taken offense at what Pat Aufderheide of *In These Times* described as the movie's false choice between "aimlessness on the margins of or ruthless participation in the mainstream of American professional life." One interesting indication that the makers of *The Big Chill* themselves have some difficulty believing their theme is the conspicuous absence in the film of the one character who is still an idealist. She is glimpsed briefly at the beginning of the film with Michael, the writer for *People* magazine who used to teach in Harlem, and is later offhandedly identified as Michael's girlfriend who *still* teaches in Harlem. This mystery woman is never heard from again because her very existence contradicts the premise of the film.

Of course, it is a little unreasonable in the first place to define idealism so uncompromisingly as one's willingness to teach in Harlem. Dedication at that level is an honorable thing, but it is also extremely rare. In fact, there are a hundred perfectly acceptable interim steps between writing for *People* and teaching in Harlem: volunteering in your spare time to be a Big Brother, running for the city council, even creating a business. When you look at the film this way, its cosmology seems unnecessarily harsh. I'm willing to believe that becoming a real estate lawyer or a writer for *People* magazine or an actor on a dumb adventure series may not be the best way to put your ideals into practice; but what's so bad about raising a family, as Karen has chosen to do? The fact

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that Karen's husband is an advertising man—with all its 1950s grey-flannel associations—is an unfair gimmick designed to create the phony impression of compromise. Then there's Harold, who is an entrepreneur of sorts, and Sarah, the doctor. While the opulence of their pillored mansion, where the film takes place, makes you wonder about his prices and her fees, the suggestion that it doesn't matter how you make your money misses the crucial distinction between

The adman's wife, the running-shoe tycoon, the drug dealer, and the doctor (left to right).

those who provide useful services, like (arguably) shoe salesmen and doctors, and those who don't, like hack writers, real estate lawyers, actors on bad TV shows, and drug dealers.

Distinctions like these are never raised in *The Big Chill* because they would muddy up the movie's neat association of political idealism with a moment in history that has passed. In fact, aside from one lightning-quick scene in which Sarah questions the depth of the group's former "commitment," there are no political moments in the film at all. We never do find out exactly what the characters were "committed" to. Instead, the film opts for an unspoken nihilism about the world: to try to resist the forces of compromise is to resist the tide. It's a cold world out there, remember? But the lack of any substantive discussion among these characters that would explain their politics places too much weight on the only information about the characters' lives that is provided in any detail: their material possessions. Since these are rendered with near-maniacal precision, the movie ends up, by default, reducing political questions to questions of fashion. All sorts of intricate social comment is communicated through the fact that this character drives a Porsche, that another character owns a Mr. Coffee automatic drip, and that everyone in the film has a blow dryer.

The ultimate effect of defining political idealism as something that happened in the sixties rather than something that could happen today is, ironically, to turn what might have been a biting criticism of one generation's moral shortcomings into an exercise in reassurance. If the people who still teach in Harlem can be kept out of sight, we don't have to recognize that some people are moved to live deeply altruistic lives long after altruism has fallen out of fashion. Our lesser anxieties about identity and friendship—the kinds of questions discussed in *The Big Chill*—seem more meaningful when those who are more inclined to talk about the problems of *other* people aren't around. Moreover, if idealism is defined in the sixties' characteristically all-or-nothing way—will you teach in Harlem or will you sell out—it can be placed safely out of reach. Few people are willing to stand lonesome at the barricades, but that shouldn't be where the argument ends. The question should then become, if not total sacrifice, what partial sacrifices can I make for my ideals?

Finally, when all you're left to consider is the morality of owning a Mr. Coffee machine, you can congratulate yourself for enduring an examination of your principles. But the thirtyish people I saw leaving the theater to the strains of "Jeremiah Was A Bullfrog" didn't look to me like they'd just come through a catharsis. They looked more like they'd just had a massage.

'Never trust anybody under 30'

I didn't notice the same look in the faces of the younger members of the audience. In fact, the notion of political idealism as something that passes by only in historical intervals, like Halley's Comet, has a tendency to make those who weren't around to witness the bright streak feel pretty low. "My time has been a limp time," sighed a 23-year-old *New Yorker* writer last August in that magazine's "Notes and Comment" column. After expressing anxiety that "my generation may not get a chance at providing lasting answers," he concluded, "there are times when I wish that I'd been born ten years earlier."

It isn't every generation that can get its little brothers and sisters to apologize for their age. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Woodstock generation seems to have infused more than one potential idealist with a deep sense of futility. "Don't bother," the children of the sixties seem to be saying. "You're not up to it." The idea that membership in a particular age group was a precondition to enlightenment has always been one of the more unattractive doctrines of the sixties generation. During the sixties, when the object of exclusionary sentiment was the older generation, "youth culture" consciousness was but one shrill note among many more melodious ones. Now that the political turmoil has subsided, however, generational chauvinism, now directed against the young, has become practically the whole symphony.

Who can forget the generation gap and the old rallying cry of "never trust anybody over 30"? The spirit is captured at its most perverse in an eerily fascinating movie made in 1968 called *Wild In The Streets*. The premise of the film is that the public clamor for an 18-year-old vote (which three years later gave us the 26th Amendment) didn't go far enough—that if you were old enough to die in Vietnam you were not only old enough to vote but old enough to lead. The hero, a 24-year-old rock star named Max Frost, offers his support to a Kennedyesque candidate for the Senate on the condition that he lower the voting age to 15; when he succeeds, he then arranges to lower the age requirements for national office and runs for president. The youthful hordes of new voters sweep Max into office. Max then declares a sort of dictatorship of the young, placing everybody over the age of 35 in concentration camps, where they are rendered docile by a heavy dose of LSD in the drinking supply.

When *Wild In The Streets* came out, Renata Adler, then a film critic for *The New York Times*, observed with some understatement that it was "rather heavily weighted against the old." But in retrospect, the most interesting thing about this self-indulgent pop fantasy is not that it culminates in the establishment of a youth culture police state where everybody over 35 is interned—though that's pretty interesting, too—but what it says about those who are too young to take part in the revolution. Pushing the logic of the youth culture to its extreme, the movie ends with an irony that in retrospect seems hackneyed but is treated like a revelation: youth is not forever. Max has this epiphany after an exchange with a blond little black-shirted boy. The boy asks Max if he can be president; Max says no. The boys asks why not; Max answers, "Because you're not old enough." The boy then asks Max how old he is. Max tells him that he's 24. The boy answers, "That's old." (You can almost hear yesterday's audiences muttering, "Oh, wow.") The film ends with the words echoing in Max's ears and another little boy muttering to his friends, "We're gonna put everybody over ten outa business."

Heavy-handed though the irony may seem, the final moments in *Wild In The Streets* stumbled onto where the generational hostility of the Woodstock generation was about to be redirected: away from the older generation, which would have to yield power sooner or later, and toward the younger one, whose existence created anxieties about the sixties generation's operating principle of "the younger the better." Thus when Abbie Hoffman recently turned 47, he declared that "watching college students today is about as exciting as watching TV bowling" and vowed that he would "never trust anybody under 30." A cloying new television series has appeared, presumably the brainchild of someone in his thirties, about a family where the parents are ex-flower children and their son is—you guessed it—a stuffed-shirt right-winger. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to find in any of the popular-culture depictions of the Woodstock culture grown up a sympathetic portrait of anyone under 30, while there are plenty of damning ones.

Fairly typical is the portrayal of "Doctor Mark," a grotesquely precocious, career-obsessed medical student who appears as a minor character in Ann Beattie's novel, *Chilly Scenes of Winter*. Here is how Doctor Mark's future is imagined by Charles, the charmingly maladjusted sixties-generation protagonist, as a Dewar's profile:

HOME: Rye, N.Y.
AGE: 35
HOBBIES: Squash; attending concerts
MOST MEMORABLE BOOK: *V.*
LAST MEMORABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT: Told some poor jerk he had an inoperable melanoma.
QUOTE: "I think everybody should go to med school and get a high-paying job and get the little woman a Maytag."
PROFILE: Keen, aggressive. Plays squash and cuts brains with precision.
SCOTCH: Dewar's "White Label"

Sure, the caricature's funny, but it's also cheap, and so is the portrayal of Chloe, Alex's girlfriend, in *The Big Chill*. Chloe is the only character of any consequence in the film who isn't part of Alex's college circle, and it's made clear from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

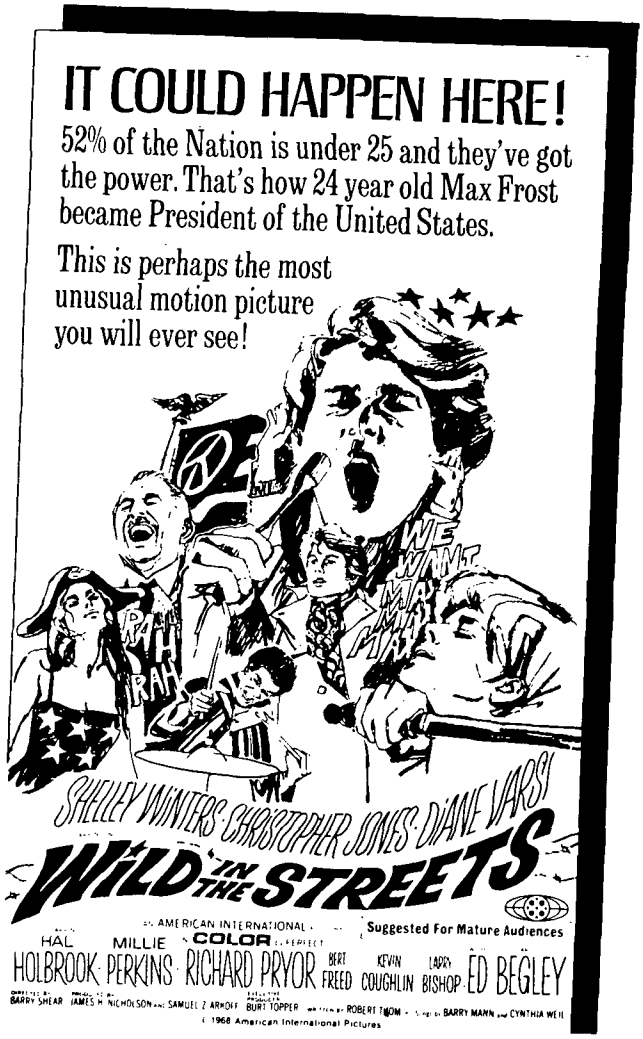
beginning of the movie that this makes a big difference. In our very first glimpse of her she is exercising before a mirror, an activity she repeats throughout the film in case we have missed the point that she is a vapid narcissist. Later in the film Chloe becomes more sympathetic—a sort of holy innocent who blurts out startling truths and helps set Nick, the drug dealer, back on his feet—but even then her innocence is seen in a clearly condescending way.

The function of this generational chauvinism against the under-30 crowd is to provide a cover for the Woodstock generation's own seductions during the Me Decade. Sure, we may be career-oriented and narcissistic, but we're not as bad as the kids who never got the chance to experience that fleeting brush with campus radicalism. Doctor Mark and Chloe don't exist to denigrate the children of the Me Decade; their purpose is to put the assumed greater emotional depth of the over-30 generation into sharper relief.

In it but not of it

As a member of the under-30 crowd myself, I can't help resenting having my generation put to this use. But the larger problem with allowing people to go strutting around saying they're superior because they're 35 is that it encourages them to regard the larger bonds of community with an informality that society can ill afford. There's a baffling scene in *The Big Chill* that illustrates what I mean. Harold and Nick are out on a morning jog. Suddenly, Harold turns to Nick and offers him some inside information on a stock deal. Nick turns him down. The incident is then forgotten for the rest of the movie, except for a brief scene where Sarah scolds Harold for making the offer (which he also apparently made to Alex), as if chiding him for overtipping a waiter.

But hasn't a fairly serious moral issue been raised? Apparently not. You can take away from the scene a couple of interpretations. It might be meant as a winking reminder that this is the sort of behavior that made the Woodstock generation hold the older generation in contempt. Now the children of the sixties have grown a bit more worldly. But when the older generation behaved this way it *deserved* to be held in contempt. Or you can read it in a mildly favorable light, as an act of noble sacrifice (civil disobedience?) by Harold, who selflessly risks being thrown in jail—as he himself points out to Nick—in order to help a friend get back on his feet. Indeed, to



the extent that the scene poses a moral question at all, it seems to be whether *Nick* would be compromising himself by accepting a handout. Set aside romantic notions of generational solidarity, however, and it's a little more clear that what the scene really depicts in its breezy way is a crude and immoral violation of a public trust.

SEC regulations may not get violated very often in the name of sixties solidarity, but the world does seem to be populated with quite a few members of that generation who think that there's nothing inconsistent about being both an ex-radical and, say, a tax lawyer who now contrives to minimize the contributions of our richest citizens to the Treasury—so long as you treat your job with the proper amount of contempt. The key is to draw your real sense of worth from your membership in the Woodstock generation. The mainstream culture has no hold on me, such peo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ple will say; I may work in the pig world, but I'm not a pig. The apotheosis of this In-It-But-Not-Of-It ethic may be Jackson Browne's song, "The Pretender," in which a self-aware self-seeker proclaims, "I'll be a happy idiot, and struggle for the legal tender." It's okay to be a tax lawyer as long as you hate yourself for it. The irony of this stance is that where once it sought to create a "relevant," alternative culture, now it serves to create a deliberately *irrelevant* one. And where once such distinctions were made in the name of politicizing previously neutral questions, now they are made to *depoliticize* them.

In this respect, the Woodstock generation is coming to resemble the people it once rebelled against: those who draw their memories of idealism and political commitment from their participation in World War II. Like the World War II generation, which after the war settled into a prolonged period of complacency and conformity, the children of the sixties seem to want little more than to quietly retreat from politics. Since few of them can claim, as their predecessors could, that they risked their lives for their country, this complacency seems even less justifiable than, say, an Iwo Jima veteran's.

Sensing that in this smugly apolitical crowd is a constituency willing to be wooed not with ideals but with nostalgic invocations of its idealistic youth, at least one presidential candidate has identified himself as the candidate of the sixties generation. "I don't have to sell myself," Gary Hart was recently quoted as saying in a flattering article in *The New Republic*. "I have to sell the need to change generations of leadership." It is particularly distressing that Gary Hart should be appealing to this mindless impulse, because he is supposed to be the candidate of "ideas." But it is the idea of the sixties generation, rather than any specifically political ideas, that sells to a group that "gave at the office" with its radicalism in the sixties.

There are some people, of course, who lived through that time who do *not* feel that they gave at the office. They are working in the various grassroots organizations around the country that Ralph Nader started in the early seventies; in Meals on Wheels groups that serve food to the elderly; in public and private shelters for the homeless; and, yes, there are even a few teaching in Harlem. Then there are those who are starting up small businesses that will create new jobs, services and products; those who are putting in a couple of days a week recording for the blind; and millions of others who in various small ways are keeping alive the spirit of idealism that animated their youth. Some protested the Vietnam war, some fought in it, and some went through the sixties with little thought of politics at all. If you ask them why they're doing it, few are likely to say, "for my generation." Instead, they will say, "for my community."

If there aren't more of them, much of the blame can be placed on the attitude toward political idealism reflected in movies like *The Big Chill*. At its best the Woodstock generation sought to promote communitarianism through its emphasis on collective living and collective political expression; even Woodstock, though it's become a cliche for the sixties idea of utopian community, offered some inspiration in its elevation of a concert to an experiment in cooperation among a large mass of people. Where the sixties idea of community went wrong was in its failure to keep alive the idea that community should exist to make the world a better place, and not merely to reinforce already strong bonds between people of the same age. The kind of community that the Woodstock generation needs to be calling for should not be the kind of community that comes easily—where attitudes and experiences are held in common. Instead, it should be calling for the kind of community that you have to work at: forging bonds between people who grew up at different times, in different places, under different circumstances of class and race. It should be a community that is more like a neighborhood, a city, a nation, and less like a class reunion. ■

Internships

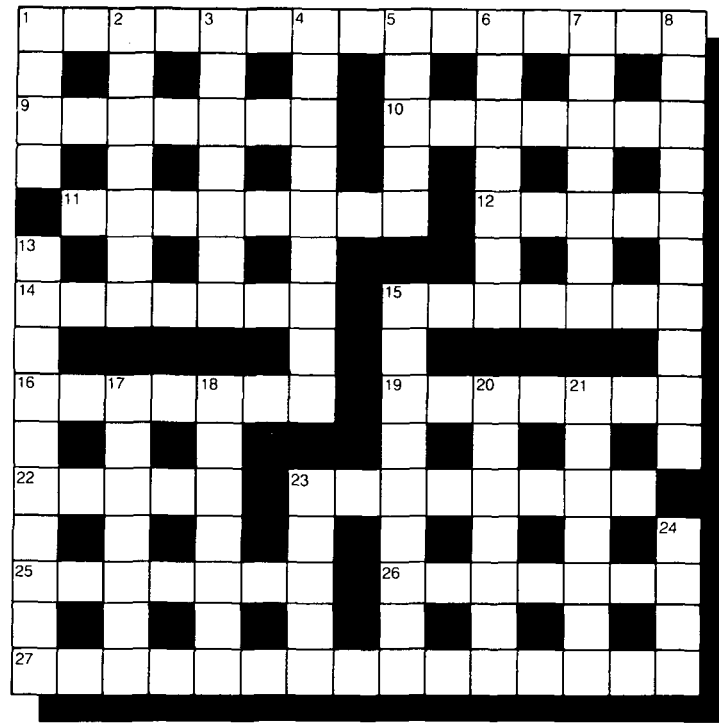
The Washington Monthly is currently accepting applications for summer internships, which involve all aspects of publishing, from business to editorial. If you are interested, please send resume, references and samples of your writing (articles or term papers) by March 15 to:

Deborah Pfeiffer
The Washington Monthly
1711 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

All applicants will be notified of a final decision by April 15.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICAL PUZZLE



by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.

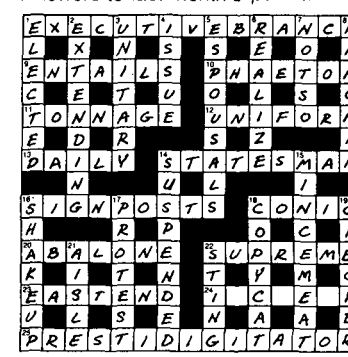
ACROSS

1. First choice in eighty-four. (7,8)
9. Pro sell trained campaign workers. (7)
10. Mailer's novel is down-to-earth. (7)
11. Disperses randomly stars, etc. (8)
12. Coach a string of coaches? (5)
14. Ten deer somehow went to college. (7)
15. Sorting threads is the most difficult. (7)
16. Secretly in the end is publicly. (7)
19. Place where post office distributed in realm? Just the opposite. (7)
22. Connecticut or Colorado, for example. (5)
23. Dislike an edition? (8)
25. Warnings upset the star. (7)
26. Deposit conjunction in theater. (7)
27. Dallas and San Francisco. (10,5)

DOWN

1. Spiritual leader caught in Aleppo perversion. (4)
2. 49, 51, and 101 before time start is wrong. (7)
3. Assistant for one gambler? (7)
4. Tardy eyes shifted history. (9)
5. Masters English house. (5)
6. Constitution before Jimmy knocked the "H" out of it. (7)
7. Copy mixed at one time. (7)
8. 1984 goal is windblown mini at noon. (10)
13. Arranged comic trade party. (10)
15. Affects phone taps strangely. (7,2)
17. Surround inn over confusion. (7)
18. Carter Near-East settlement on a particular level. (7)
20. Boy in fewer classes. (7)
21. Crowd challenge and actor it affected. (4,3)
23. Investment in reserved seats. (5)
24. Favorites step up the pressure. (4)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Care for a spir in my chateau

How the Postal Service turns first-class custo

Illustration by La Mouche

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Postmaster?'

s into second-class citizens

By Richard Meyer

Last October the United States Postal Service announced its desire to raise the price of a first-class stamp from 20 to 23 cents. Aside from the scattered grumblings of a few editorial writers and cartoonists (one of whom depicted the new 23-cent stamp as bearing a likeness of Al Capone), the news was greeted with the same shrug of unsurprised indifference that attends George Steinbrenner's periodic decision to fire the manager of the New York Yankees. The press downplayed the story so much that many people missed it entirely. Even the strong whiff of fiscal irresponsibility did not seem to rouse the public from its apparent torpor. The same day it announced the 23-cent first-class stamp, the USPS signed a $47,000-a-month lease on a Citation II jet for use by its top executives. Assistant Postmaster General Mary Layton explained that the jet was "not so much to save money, but to save executive time." *The Washington Post* responded by burying the story on page A10.

That public expectations have sunk this low is really not all that surprising, given the Postal Service's sorry record of recent years. The most obvious indignity is the price of a first-class stamp. Since 1971 it has risen from 6 to 20 cents, much faster than the rate of inflation. Compare that to the 86-year stretch between 1885 and 1971, when the stamp increased from 3 to 6 cents. The cost of living during the same period nearly quintupled.

The various ways in which postal services have declined in recent years are almost too numerous

Richard Meyer is a writer living in Washington D.C. Lawrence Mahl provided research assistance for this article.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to list. If you live in a housing development built after 1978, you already know the Postal Service considers you a second-class citizen; you're legally ineligible for "to the door" delivery and are supposed to collect your mail at the curbside or from special "cluster boxes." Saturday window service has been discontinued in many parts of the country, making it even more inconvenient for those who work to use the post office. If you've noticed that those once ubiquitous blue postal boxes are harder to find, it's because the USPS long ago reduced their number in an "economy move." Were your camellias trampled last spring by an unapologetic mailman? It could be the result of a USPS directive issued in 1977 that instructed mail carriers to cut across lawns to save time.

Then, of course, there's the mail itself. Your sense of its getting delivered at a somewhat more leisurely pace happens to be borne out by the Postal Service's own figures. In 1969 it took an average of 1.5 days to deliver a first-class letter. Today, after several billions of dollars have been spent on automated letter-sorting devices, it takes an average of 1.68 days. In 1974 the General Accounting Office discovered that about 7 percent of first-class mail is sent to a wrong destination somewhere along its route; later, a USPS official testified that the figure was probably higher. And if you're a businessman, you won't be surprised to learn that a 1981 study by the Direct Mail Marketing Association found that up to 8 percent of third-class bulk mail never gets delivered.

Those disgruntled with first-class mail service may be initially relieved to learn that the failure rate for Express Mail seldom exceeds 5 percent. But Express Mail, which supposedly guarantees overnight delivery, happens to cost a minimum of $9.35. What if the letter or package that absolutely, positively had to be there the next day, doesn't make it? In the worst of businesslike traditions, the USPS will reimburse you only if *you* notify them of the delay—and specifically apply for a refund.

Rising stamp prices and slower, less reliable delivery is bad enough. But perhaps the average citizen's biggest frustration involves something more intangible. The Federal Express commercial that depicts a line of customers growing old while two postal clerks studiously ignore them is memorable, not just because it's an amusing caricature, but because it's all too true. You've probably stood in line yourself for nearly half an hour on more than one occasion, watching with mounting impatience as the postal clerk fumbled for his inkpad and thumbed slowly through his zip code directory. Perhaps you recently lost an insured package and were forced to fill out various forms and endure a long wait—typically 60 days or more—to get reimbursed. Or maybe it was just the air of rude indifference the postal clerk displayed the last time you made a simple inquiry, like asking for half-a-dozen commemorative stamps. None other than William F. Bolger, the postmaster general, admits that one-third of the complaints he receives are about surly window clerks. "We emphasize courtesy in training," he told an interviewer in 1981. "When we get a certain number of complaints, clerks are sent back for retraining on their own time. But it's like a vaccination that didn't take."

Two cheers for socialism

Those who recall the U.S. Post Office of a generation ago know it enjoyed a distinctly different reputation. A letter mailed in Washington, D.C., stood a good chance of arriving in New York City the next day. Mail was delivered twice a day, three times a day for businesses. Letters bound for distant cities were sorted while en route in specially designed railroad cars; this degree of diligence seems almost quaint today. Those arguing on behalf of the virtues of socialism could always resort, if the going got rough, to one surefire argument: the post office was a government-owned enterprise that was efficient, inexpensive, and publicly accountable.

Mike Causey, a reporter for *The Washington Post* and an astute observer of the federal bureaucracy, put it best in a 1983 study of the USPS that was done by Ralph Nader's Center for Responsive Law. Causey told the author of the study, Kathleen Conkey, "In the old days you could call your congressman and very likely get action if you had a postal problem. Now they have a consumer advocate and you have to write him a letter just like a big corporation."

That's what the Postal Service now prides itself on being: a large, modern corporation. So when the Postal Service posted a profit of $802 million in 1982, its managers gleefully trumpeted the fact as proof that the 1970 decision by Congress to reconstitute the USPS as an "independent government corporation" had finally been vindicated. So enthusiastic was the praise for the USPS's balance sheet from other quarters that it easily drowned out those few critics who had the bad manners to point out that the USPS was also supposed to be a *nonprofit* corporation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Politicians congratulated the Postal Service for its adherence to corporate standards of efficiency. The four major unions representing the system's 670,000 postal workers quickly took credit for their own role in racking up the surplus; they also put the USPS on notice that they would demand a healthy share of those profits when their contracts expired later this year. The press was also favorably impressed; *Forbes* magazine, in an August 1, 1983, article, opined that "the entire economy will benefit from USPS profitability." The *Forbes* article also speculated wistfully about how much better life would be if "Congress could only get the rest of the federal government on this kind of businesslike basis."

Given the popular assessment of USPS service, one is tempted to wonder whether *Forbes*'s plucky patriarch, Malcolm Sr., has taken one too many balloon rides into those upper realms where the oxygen gets dangerously thin. The USPS, after all, is hardly a typical business—it pays no taxes, holds a monopoly on its main source of revenue, and has, in effect, virtual carte blanche to increase its stamp prices. The USPS has also racked up a cumulative loss of more than $3 billion since 1970, even counting last year's surplus, a record that would certainly disqualify most private corporations from such accolades.

Still, the praise from the unions and *Forbes* illustrates a key point about today's United States Postal Service. Though it may no longer aim to please the average citizen, the USPS does its best to please some of its other constituents. Those constituents happen to be a great deal more powerful than your Aunt Martha, whose Christmas card you mailed with a week to spare didn't arrive until the eve of Superbowl XVIII. And two of the most powerful constituents happen to be postal workers and large magazines like *Forbes*.

The Post Office no longer aims to please the average citizen, who pays ever-higher prices for service that's getting worse.

'Hooked on the money'

A look at the Postal Service's solicitude to certain, preferred constituents should start with the postal worker. The average postal worker makes $27,571 a year in salary and benefits, the latter of which typically includes five weeks of vacation. Most of the 670,000 jobs are indoors—even most of those who must venture into the rain, snow, sleet, and gloom of night now have vehicles with working heaters. The job requires no advanced training; applicants are evaluated according to how well they score on a civil service examination.

Some 980,000 people know a good deal when they see one—that's how many applied in 1982 for 27,000 positions. When 100 postal jobs opened last summer in Newark, New Jersey, the rush of applicants actually tore the post office's door off its hinges. Referring to the nation's smaller communities, Bolger himself observes, "In many cases today the postal worker is the best-paid guy in town."

The postal worker who joins for the money usually ends up staying for the same reason—plus the job security. The current contract with postal unions prohibits, except under the most extreme of circumstances, the lay-off of employees who have been with the USPS for six years or longer. Unless a worker is caught punching his supervisor in the snout or drinking Jack Daniels in the lobby, a tangled web of grievance and appeal procedures offers the postal worker nearly total protection from being fired. Last year only 2,600 workers—about one-third of 1 percent—were fired; about the same number quit. These figures are even more dramatic when you realize that alcoholism is a widely acknowledged problem, and that USPS employees have a deserved reputation for being somewhat less than diligent. A recent GAO study

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of three major facilities found that postal workers average ten unauthorized absences a year.

Postal workers owe their comfortable circumstances in large part to the 1970 reorganization act, which gave their unions the right to bargain collectively for wages, a privilege other federal unions do not enjoy. While their brethren in the civil service saw their wages climb 70 percent during the 1970s, postal workers, holding out the threat of an illegal strike, won increases of 123 percent. During the last round of negotiations in 1981, many observers believed the unions would follow through on their strike threat—until the air traffic controllers beat them to the punch and were irrevocably fired by President Reagan.

The 1970 act mandates that compensation for postal workers must be "comparable to the rates and types of compensation paid in the private sector." But "comparability" is in the eye of the beholder. A recent study by two University of Pennsylvania professors found that the only comparable workers in the private sector whose compensation was similar to that of postal workers were those unionized workers who belonged to the United Steel Workers, the United Autoworkers, and the Teamsters. But in one important respect postal workers have a decided advantage over these workers, whose ranks were severely depleted by the recent recession. John Crutcher, an outspoken member of the Postal Rate Commission—a notoriously toothless regulatory body that reviews but has no veto power over postal rates—remarks, "If you were to ask any of the 250,000 unemployed autoworkers to suggest a monetary value for the postal workers' [no-layoff] clause, you might get some surprising answers."

The postal unions' best defense for their members' more-than-comfortable circumstances is that much of their work is so unpleasant. It's certainly true that automation has taken once routine jobs like letter sorting to new heights of tedium. Think about punching five-digit zip codes into a keyboard as letters whiz by at the rate of one per second, and you get the picture. What the unions prefer to downplay—but postal workers themselves readily acknowledge—is that not everyone is a letter sorter. In fact, many postal jobs are highly coveted for their pleasant working conditions and flexible hours.

Take the letter carrier. The advantages of the job include regular human contact and freedom from being under the boss's watchful eye—not to mention those generous souls who still tip their postman at Christmas. And because mail routes are often designed with the not-so-fleet-footed in mind, the carrier who moves with dispatch can often complete a day's work in five or six hours. This helps explain why the competition for carrier jobs is keen, even though the base pay is $800 a year less than a letter sorter's.

The average postal worker earns $27,571 in salary and benefits, often making him, in the Postmaster General's words, 'the best-paid guy in town.'

Stanley Sloan, a letter carrier in the Washington, D.C., area, took a job with the Postal Service after losing one as a computer repairman. Sloan worked a few years on the "inside" as a clerk and hated it. Now he's walking a route and says he's relatively happy, though he'd prefer to be a driver so he could stay warm in the winter and have even less contact with supervisors. Sloan, like many carriers, has enough free time to hold a second job. He and his brother have started a private garbage-hauling business; if it proves highly successful, Sloan says, he might quit the Postal Service. But that's unlikely. "I don't think you can make the work more interesting," he says. "But you [can] get hooked on the money."

The phenomenon Sloan describes seems to be the Postal Service's main occupational hazard. In fact, not one of the dozen postal workers I interviewed complained about being paid too little; several even said they felt overpaid. Boring as some of the work may be, the captivity is usually too plush to prompt any serious attempt at escape. Jimmy Bryant, a retired supervisor from Orlando, Florida, describes the situation: "If you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can get through the first year, you're there for your entire career."

Velvet handcuffs

While nothing can turn punching zip code buttons into stimulating, inspiring work, there are ways the Postal Service could increase the job satisfaction of its employees. It could rotate workers more often among a variety of jobs, or divide them into teams and give incentive bonuses to those who perform well. It could also require that promotion decisions take merit into account. Aside from having to pass a minimal competency test, all promotions within the Postal Service are now based solely on seniority. Job performance is irrelevant.

So what do the unions who represent postal workers think of such reforms? They're against every one of them. Their response to their members' legitimate complaints about tedious and sometimes unsafe working conditions has traditionally involved little more than urging that the velvet handcuffs become even more comfortable. They've simply demanded even more money.

Why has management acquiesced to high wages, no performance review, and such stiff restrictions on its ability to dismiss workers? However much USPS officials may gripe about the unions, they've learned that placating workers with more money is the easiest way to buy labor peace. It's the path of least resistance, largely because most of the customers who must pay for that peace through hefty wage hikes have nowhere else to turn. A recent study by Dr. Douglas Adie of Ohio University observed that the Postal Service "has no real incentives to efficiency. Managers make decisions in a way to reduce their psychic rather than dollar costs, and one important psychic cost is the friction of employee relations in dealing with postal unions....It is therefore 'cheaper' for management to be generous with wages than to stand firmly for efficiency."

Indeed, postmasters and supervisors are often more than silent partners in this conspiracy; they have their own interest in perpetuating costly inefficiencies. For example, the main post office in Washington, D.C., has one supervisor for every ten workers. Although the USPS has lost 70,000 employees since 1970—the unions have willingly sacrificed jobs on behalf of higher wages for those remaining—it has managed to add more than 1,500 supervisors. These supervisors frequently have one thing in common with union members: an indifference to saving the customer money and an obsessive attention to job comforts and status.

James Hatcher once had a job on the loading docks of New York City's General Post Office that required him to weigh incoming mail. It was a relatively simple task, especially since all he did was watch his boss fabricate the figures. Hatcher says his supervisor explained that he had a supervisor who wanted *his* supervisors to think incoming volume was high. Why? More employees would be assigned to the loading dock, thereby giving the supervisor of the loading dock more status.

Another employee, a young mail carrier in a Chicago suburb, told me he once complained to his boss that he was finishing his work in much fewer than eight hours. When he asked for a longer route, he was told he would have to wait until the routes were redesigned, which happens just once a year. He then offered to help with other jobs around the post office. He was told that work rules prohibited this. He got the message; today, he keeps himself occupied for eight hours by taking long lunches, working at a leisurely pace, and going home early whenever possible.

A final example of the mutual indifference to efficiency involves part-time workers. As anyone who sends Christmas cards and packages knows, the local post office is busier during certain times of the year. To handle periodic increases of volume, it obviously would make sense to rely on temporary workers, a much cheaper solution than creating slots for regular employees. But the contract between the USPS and its unions heavily discourages part-time workers: in a postal facility employing 200 workers, at least 90 percent of the employees must be full-time. The Postal Service's inability to hire many part-time workers is one reason that it was socked with an overtime bill in 1982 of almost $1 billion.

What's surprising is that USPS managers seem as happy with this arrangement as the unions. In an interview, Bolger cited the elimination of part-time workers as one of the major achievements of the post-1970 postal system. "Just for Christmas operations, we used to have over 400,000 temporary people brought into the Postal Service," he recalls. What did Bolger, who began his career with the post office in 1941 as a civil servant, dislike about this practice? The part-time workers, he says, were "political patronage" jobs, not civil service positions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The productivity con

Neither the unions nor management see it as in their respective interest to press hard for cheaper, and better, postal service. Besides, it's easy to get away with inefficiency because no one is looking. Scan the last three years of the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and you'll find a conspicuous dearth of articles detailing what postal workers really do all day for their money. Nor will you find much insight into whether postal rates are set fairly, and whether those "costs" that the Postal Service cites when it asks for rate hikes really are unavoidable.

Why so little coverage? Two reasons, the first being that the press is so easily snowed by the USPS's statistics. A good example of that involves something called "gross productivity," which USPS officials claim has increased 43 percent since 1970. Bolger usually uses this statistic to bolster his case for a rate hike, implying that the USPS is doing such a thorough job of cutting costs that it has no choice but to raise stamp prices—reluctantly, of course.

The gross productivity figure merits a closer look. The Postal Service calculates it by simply dividing the total pieces of mail handled by the total work hours. This sounds reasonable until you realize that the mix of mail has changed dramatically since 1970. Today, there are proportionately fewer packages (which are hard to handle), because most of the nation's parcels are now delivered by the United Parcel Service. Customers have found UPS is cheaper, largely because employees are paid about two-thirds of the Postal Service's pay scale. Perhaps most important, the productivity figure doesn't account for the vast increase in pre-sorting of the mail that the USPS still carries. Pre-sorting, which saves the Postal Service a substantial amount of time, allows business customers to mail at substantially lower rates. Using a different definition of productivity, which tried to account for these differences, the Bureau of Labor Statistics recently concluded that in some years when postal management was saying productivity had increased, it had actually dropped.

Likewise, few reporters have taken a close look at the Postal Service's claim that 95 percent of its mail meets delivery goals. According to these goals, "local mail" must be delivered overnight, letters inside a 600-mile radius within two days, and all other mail within three days.

Who defines "local mail"? The same local postmasters whose performance is being judged by the delivery tests that the USPS periodically conducts. If a postmaster has difficulty servicing a close-in area because of, say, slow employees and incompetent supervisors, he has an easy recourse: he simply defines "local mail" to exclude the troublesome post office. The GAO has also discovered that USPS managers often notify postmasters as to when they'll be tested. Finally, the 95 percent standard applies only to getting a letter from the originating post office to the post office closest to the destination—not to the addressee's mailbox.

So the Postal Service has rigged its own game. That's why it's even more disconcerting to realize that it *still* can't meet its delivery goals. In 1981, Bolger boasted that "local mail" met the overnight delivery goal of 95 percent. But only 86 percent of the two-day mail passed muster, as did only 87 percent of the three-day mail. For these two categories, this was a substantial drop from 1976, when the figures were 92 and 90 percent, respectively.

Mail bonding

But let's not give too much credit to media naivete as an explanation for the failure to report the inner workings of the Postal Service. There's another reason: the relationship between the USPS and those private enterprises that make money reporting the news. In many cases the relationship is just one big backscratch, coming in the form of multimillion-dollar mailing subsidies to newspapers and magazines.

Perhaps the best deal given the media—"red-tag service"—is available to some of the nation's most profitable publications. *The Wall Street Journal*'s 1.3 million papers, which weigh a half pound each, are delivered overnight by the Postal Service for 14 cents apiece. In its home territory of Manhattan, the *Journal* pays just 5 cents. The regular second-class rate for a similar package is 95 cents, and delivery can take up to 10 days. But with red-tag service, postal workers drop what they're doing when the *Journal* arrives to ensure it reaches subscribers by the next day.

The Wall Street Journal is not the only beneficiary of this service. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, and other "time-sensitive" publications also reap its benefits in exchange for meeting some relatively simple pre-sorting and delivery guidelines. "Time sensitive," according to USPS regulations, means the publication must be published at least once a week. So why do *Forbes*, and its main competitor, *Fortune*, get the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the Postal Service had to choose between raising first-class stamps to 20 cents and raising rates for subsidized 'red tag' mailers like *Forbes*, the big mailers won.

same treatment even though they come out once every two weeks? When *The Washington Monthly* inquired several years ago, a postal official replied that the two magazines "aren't biweeklies. They're fortnightlies."

To help dissuade USPS bureaucrats from consulting a dictionary and revoking this exceptional treatment, *Forbes*'s executives have been wise to apparently cultivate a special relationship with their benefactors. Effusive praise for "businesslike behavior" is only part of the effort. Last April Malcolm Forbes Sr. took William Bolger up for a spin in one of Forbes's fabled balloons, a huge replica of the Chateau de Balleroy in France. The occasion was the issuance of a new commemorative stamp celebrating—what else?—the history of ballooning. After returning Bolger safely to earth, Forbes hosted a fancy brunch for 350 guests, including USPS executives and their wives.

It's not hard to understand why *Forbes* and other publications are so grateful for red-tag service. The average citizen who wants guaranteed, overnight delivery from the USPS has only one choice: to shell out at least $9.35 for Express Mail. *Forbes* and its "time-sensitive" brethren can get the identical service for a little more than one-hundredth of that. Indeed, nothing better illustrates how the USPS treats the typical "first-class" postal patron like a third-class citizen—and gives the royal treatment to large mailers under the guise of "second-class" mail rates.

In 1981 the Postal Rate Commission, the regulatory body established by the 1970 reorganization act to supposedly protect the public's interest in rate-setting cases, concluded that other postal patrons were being forced to subsidize red-tag service. The PRC accordingly recommended that the USPS's request for a raise in first-class stamp prices from 15 to 20 cents be scaled back to 18 cents. The PRC also recommended higher increases in other classes of mail, and specifically urged that red-tag service be priced at 3.4 cents more than regular second-class mail.

The reaction was swift and furious. *Newsweek* immediately threatened to develop alternative delivery systems. Chapin Carpenter, executive vice president of the Magazine Publishers Association, said his organization was "angered and appalled." Carpenter threatened to fight any such increase in court.

As the PRC pointed out, red-tag recipients, at the very least, should be paying their way. Besides, the threat of taking business elsewhere should be seen for the bluff that it largely is. Comparably cheap alternatives may exist in some concentrated, urban areas. But who else besides the Postal Service delivers, overnight, to every destination in the country, much less at such a low price?

But the USPS quickly let it be known which class of postal patron it was looking out for. In November 1981 it overruled the PRC's recommendations, and issued the 20-cent stamp while keeping red-tag service free of charge. Lee Fritschler, the chairman of the PRC, was furious, predicting that the 20-cent stamp would give the USPS an unwarranted windfall of $1 billion in 1982.

In 1982 the USPS actually posted a $1.2 billion surplus—and then risked a reprimand from its own accountants, Ernst & Whinney, by increasing the reserves of its workers' compensation fund to reduce the figure to a slightly less embarrassing $802 million. (Remember, the Postal Service is ostensibly a nonprofit organization.) So did *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek* say a word about how the USPS had proved itself guilty of premeditated price goug-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing? Hardly. *Forbes* seemed to speak for all of them by characterizing the surplus as eloquent testimony to the Postal Service's new-found business sense.

The wrong kind of politics

Of course, the vast majority of the 110 billion pieces of mail that the Postal Service handled last year did arrive at their proper destination within a reasonable amount of time. It's also true that many of us have probably had occasion to use that most credible of excuses—"It must have gotten lost in the mail"—to cover up for some act of thoughtlessness or debt-evasion. And some people have even accepted the judgment of those organs of respectable opinion that say we really can't expect anything better. This latter attitude was perhaps best summed up by a recent study of the USPS by the National Academy of Public Administration. The study had little save praise for the Postal Service's operations, though it offhandedly observed that "The USPS, in its successful efforts to reduce costs and increase productivity, seems to have pursued these objectives at some sacrifice in employee courtesy and customer services."

But what the NAPA study fails to recognize is that the Postal Service hasn't forsaken service to all customers—just some of them. Those who deplore the passing of the village post office as a community center, or the deterioration of predictable, swift mail service, realize how the focus on the bottom line has been particularly painful. But the pain would be more tolerable if everyone were treated alike. As red-tag service graphically illustrates, some postal patrons are getting a great deal more "service" than the rest of us.

And that raises some important questions. If the USPS enjoys such discretion in parceling out "service," why should the lucky recipients be selected by a small group of executives who are unaccountable to the public? Shouldn't those decisions be made by the public's representatives, subject to public debate? How else can the average man expect the Postal Service to treat him as an equal?

The question is not whether the primary emphasis of the USPS should be on service, but how the decisions on bestowing that service are made. After all, despite the USPS's corporate aspirations, and even though in 1983 it operated free of a congressional operating subsidy for the first time since its inception, the organization that delivers our mail isn't named "The Postal Company, Inc." It's called the United States Postal *Service*. The name recognizes that, historically, the post office's primary goal has not been the ferocious pursuit of black ink on its annual ledger sheet. Were it to slavishly adhere to the dictates of "business efficiency," the USPS might logically decide to start charging only 10 cents for letters mailed from New York City to Los Angeles, based on the "economies of scale" involved in moving large quantities of mail—and $1 for letters sent from Caribou, Maine, to Antelope, Oregon. But the public has traditionally put other values first, such as the desire to provide all Americans, regardless of how remote their location, with accessible, equally priced postal service. That desire reflects not "businesslike" behavior, but a long-standing commitment to the basic principle of egalitarianism. Similarly, the fast-vanishing tradition of postal workers' putting service to the individual customer first recognized that the Postal Service is still the most visible example of government in people's everyday lives. When people lose faith in the post office, it colors their attitude about everything else government does.

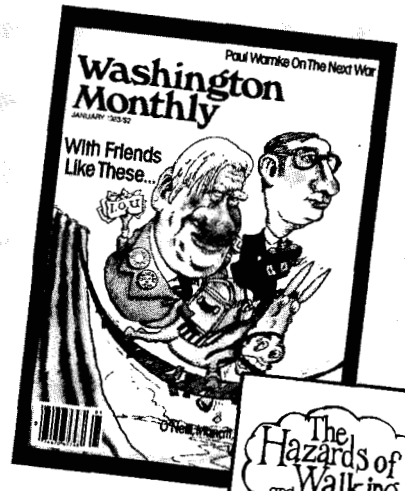
The 1970 reorganization act was touted as a way to restore the public's faith in its postal service by removing the last vestiges of "politics" from the system. No longer would Congress be able to meddle in the post office's affairs; no longer could jobs be given out as political rewards. But the act has clearly backfired. Politics still play their part, but now the system responds, not to the complaints of those who once wrote letters to their congressmen, but to those powerful groups that benefit most from the system's generosity. Unions have discovered how to use the threat of strikes and the collective bargaining process to win exorbitant wages and work rules that undermine efficiency and courteous service. The system's managers have learned that they can operate with little public scrutiny, raising prices and cutting back on service with scarcely more than feeble protests. And large mailers have learned to protect their interests by hiring $150-an-hour lawyers to lobby the USPS so that it continues to force first-class letters to subsidize special deals like red-tag service.

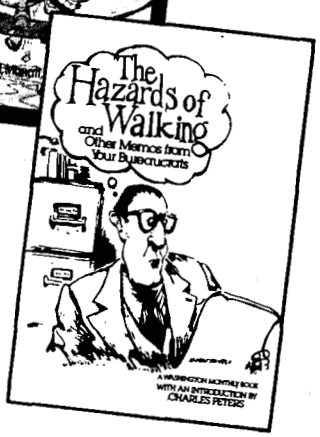
And what about the average citizen? Most of us don't even bother to complain anymore when a letter gets lost, or when we're made to feel humiliated by a rude window clerk. It's not that we don't want to complain. It's just that now we feel it really won't make any difference. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPECIAL GIFT OFFER

Give one, get one





That's right. You give someone a *Washington Monthly* subscription, and we'll give you a FREE copy of *The Hazards of Walking*, the $5.95 Houghton-Mifflin book that features the best Memos of the Month from *The Washington Monthly*. So give *The Washington Monthly* to a friend, a colleague, an organization, or maybe your town or school library. You'll be giving a year's worth of original ideas and behind-the-scenes looks at Washington from what *The New Republic* calls "one of America's great little magazines.' And you'll be getting a chance to enter the hilarious, sometimes horrifying world of government bureaucracy.

Our gift subscription price is just $18 for one full year (11 issues in all). The regular subscription price is $24, so with the $5.95 *Hazards of Walking*, you'll be getting a $29.95 value for only $18—a savings of 40 percent.

The Washington Monthly
1711 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, D.C.

Send a one-year *Washington Monthly* subscription to:

Name

Address

City State Zip

☐ I'm enclosing payment of $18, so send me my FREE copy of *The Hazards of Walking* right away!

☐ Bill me later. I understand that you'll send me my FREE copy of *The Hazards of Walking* when payment is received.

Donor:

Name

Address

City State Zip

024S

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bill Keller
ON POLITICAL BOOKS

Richard Viguerie, the master fund-raiser and propagandist of the right wing, has a talent for leaping in front of a mob and calling it a parade. He has built his direct mail company in Falls Church, Virginia, into a lucrative enterprise by grabbing the attention of gun owners, right-to-lifers, right-to-workers, fundamentalist Christians, sagebrush rebels, gold bugs, Taiwan loyalists, anticommunists, antihomosexuals, antifeminists, and assorted other antis, and, after reaching into their wallets for the cause, declaring them a movement.

These constituencies have come to be known collectively as the New Right. The phrase was coined to distinguish them from traditional conservatives, whose orientation is more Eastern, intellectual, partisan Republican, and, in the view of Viguerie's comrades, elitist and morally compromised.

Viguerie's first book, which he published in 1980 and promoted with such zeal that the newspaper bureau where I work still has eight complimentary hardback copies filling space on various bookshelves, was entitled *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead.* In it, he claimed credit on the New Right's behalf for the election of Ronald Reagan and thoughtfully laid out a suitable agenda for the new president. (This may sound presumptuous when you consider that Reagan was not Viguerie's personal favorite for the job; he preferred, and raised money for, former Texas Governor John Connally and Illinois Representative Phil Crane.)

Viguerie's new book, *The Establishment vs. The People,** is an effort to pep up the movement after three dispiriting years of watching Reagan sell grain and pipeline equipment to the Russians, bail out the international banks, raise taxes, set record deficits, reappoint Paul Volcker, and generally ignore the agenda of the New Right.

This is not a book to be read for rigorous analysis. It is written in the catchy, simplistic polemical style of Viguerie's fund-raising letters. One chapter is given over entirely to editorial cartoons, another to short, uplifting quotations from the New Right network, another to "An Open Letter to Presidents, Present and Future," another to a bit of wishful thinking in which a political scientist with a computer demonstrates that a populist party could capture the presidency. Viguerie goes to embarrassing lengths to affectionately pat every fanny in the New Right, including his own, as when he quotes a Moral Majority official lauding Viguerie as "brilliant, insightful, and wisely prophetic."

The book's chief virtue is inadvertent. Viguerie makes it pretty obvious why the title of his first book was at best premature. Though the New Right has enjoyed some success in exploiting narrow grievances and class bitterness, Viguerie and his colleagues are not ready to lead anything as complicated as a nation.

Actually, we're not even calling them the New Right anymore. Viguerie now prefers "New Populist" or "Neopopulist." It is a more marketable label, I think ("New Right" has always reminded me of the Australian wine producer who calls his stuff "Long Flat Red"), and probably more accurate. New Right theorists like Kevin Phillips and critics like Alan Crawford have already thoroughly traced the movement's populist antecedents, from the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s, through William Jennings Bryan, Huey Long, and Joe McCarthy, to George Wallace and Jesse Helms. It is a tradition of "politics of resentment," often inspiring in its iconoclasm and compassion for the common man, but often also deeply ignorant and reactionary. It is to traditional, conservative Republicanism what the Yippies are to the Democratic Study Group.

Viguerie and his cohorts in the Moral Majority and the National Conservative Political Action Committee and so on are united by a common animus toward the arrogant, faceless institutions by which the little guys on Viguerie's computerized mailing lists feel manipulated and excluded: Big Government, Big Unions, Big Business, Big Media, Big Law, Big Education, Big Banks. These are Viguerie's chapter titles and objects of cold rage.

Suspicion of bigness is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, some of his grievances, particularly in the chapters on business and education, would be at home in this magazine. But Viguerie has

Bill Keller is a reporter for the Washington bureau of the Dallas Times Herald.

**Regnery Gateway, Inc., $12.95.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the traditional populist difficulty translating his complaints into something lasting and constructive. Populism is better at making rhetoric and revolutions than laws and governments.

Mistrustful of institutions, Viguerie proclaims his faith in the people. If only government could be made more immediately responsive to the popular will, he says, things would be okay. He is a great believer in the initiative and referendum, in the popular election of judges and the recall of politicians who flaunt the public will.

But neopopulism's own will is torn by contradictions. Isolationist tendencies war with a flag-waving interventionism (Viguerie would pull U.S. troops out of Europe but would set the CIA loose to undermine governments we don't like in Cuba, Nicaragua, Eastern Europe, and Syria). A libertarian streak (demanding freedom from busing, the public school monopoly, prying IRS agents, and gun-control agents) coexists uneasily with a stern disciplinarian bent (Viguerie wants laws to make divorce more difficult, and life prison terms for drug peddlers). Viguerie's faith in the people struggles against a powerful sense that the people are wallowing in original sin. He devotes a chapter to chiding the masses for drinking too much, cheating on their taxes, wasting electricity, telling off-color jokes, and accepting federal subsidies. "Have you considered that you could be as responsible for America's problems as the homosexual pimp on New York City's 42nd Street?" he asks.

In the government-by-referendum Viguerie seems to prefer, he would probably find himself betrayed by even the interest groups he claims as his own. How many farmers, a group he dotes on as the antithesis of Eastern elitism, would endorse his proposals to abolish government crop supports and ban all trade with communist governments? Doesn't Viguerie wonder why so many of the evangelical Christians he embraces as his own also support a nuclear freeze? And his gun-owning friends are one of the most powerful constituencies for preservation of public lands, something Viguerie sees as a scheme against progress. Viguerie's deeply felt convictions on gun control (against), abortion (against), and the death penalty (surprise: against), are minority views, if you believe the polls.

Elsewhere, Viguerie's prejudices collide, leaving him immobilized. For example, he deplores paternalistic welfare programs that prescribe how a poor family must divide its resources among food, housing, and medicine: "The unspoken assumption of the welfare bureaucracy is that poor people just don't have enough sense to use money for food unless it comes to them in the form of food stamps." But later on, we learn that Viguerie doesn't much trust the good sense of the poor, either, when he groans righteously about the food stamps spent on "filet mignon, fancy desserts, and tickets in state and local lotteries." Rather than resolve the contradiction in his thinking about welfare, Viguerie tries to make the source of his confusion go away by advocating sharp reductions: a cut of "at least" 50 percent in food stamps, elimination of public housing, and a prayer that economic recovery will lift all boats.

Leery of institutions and uneasy with the popular will, Viguerie winds up putting his hope in a great, as yet undiscovered, leader. "Probably the only way we can save America," he writes in one of the book's more revealing passages, "is by the election of a great leader as president who believes in and understands God's law.... Individually, and in groups, we should pray for God to send us this leader." The New Right: We're Ready to Be Led.

Ronald Reagan has failed—in Viguerie's opinion, if not necessarily in the eyes of the populist masses—to be that leader. He is just the latest New Right hero to be cast overboard for excessive pragmatism (Barry Goldwater was another). If we take Viguerie's words at face value, it is hard to imagine a leader who *would* conform to his expectations.

But the fact is, Viguerie has never been a stickler for ideological purity in his heroes. George Wallace, for whom Viguerie once reportedly raised $6 million, was, aside from his segregationist views, a big-government liberal in his early terms as governor of Alabama. John Connally, the former Texas governor, would find plenty to dispute in Viguerie's chapter on 100 Ways to Make America Great Again, not least of all the abolition of tax subsidies for the businesses that now pay Connally's legal retainers.

What Viguerie really wants is a leader who will listen to Richard Viguerie. He wants a piece of the action.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As I write this, a press release arrives from Viguerie's command post exhorting President Reagan to remove American Marines from Lebanon immediately. In case the president is unsure how to go about it, Viguerie helpfully offers a first step: "Appoint a panel of conservatives to recommend within 15 days the best way to manage a withdrawal." That may sound like laughable advice from an arch-enemy of needless bureaucracy, but it reflects Viguerie's deepest yearning—to have himself and his friends looked to for something more than their mailing lists. That is a natural enough feeling from someone who has spent so long with his nose pressed to the windows of government. More important, to the extent the feeling of being left out and looked down upon is shared by many other Americans, it is the source of what influence the New Right has mustered, the emotional wellspring of neopopulism. If anything binds Viguerie's odd lot of interest groups, it is the common sense that they and their values—work, family and patriotism—are sneered at by the establishment.

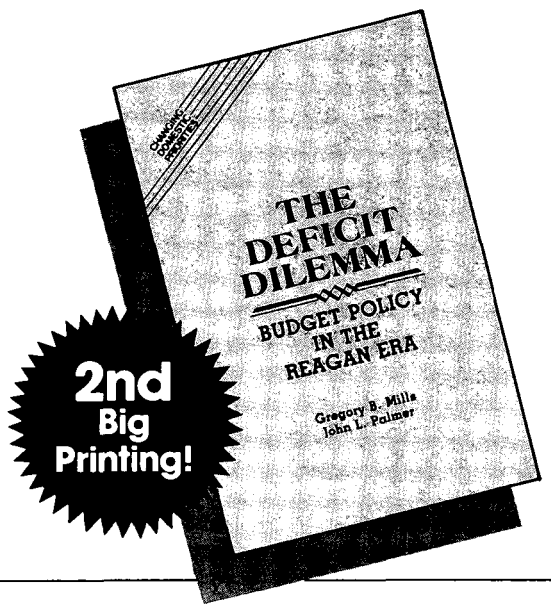
"Populism identifies with the 'common man,' that is, the man or woman who works for a living," Viguerie writes. "It does not ridicule his music, religion, or manner of dress." Viguerie's appeal is to Americans who believe those in power laugh at their prayers, condescend to their patriotism, belittle their folk heroes. "They want someone who will sweep from the halls of power the bureaucrats who ridicule the beliefs and the lifestyle of ordinary Americans," Viguerie says.

Liberals (and traditional conservatives) may not be inclined to listen to the new populists, the heirs of George Wallace, for lessons in tolerance. Populism has always kept company with more malignant isms—racism and jingoism among them. But the hurt feelings of the middle-class Americans Viguerie writes to are genuine, and powerful.

The people on Viguerie's mailing lists may not be able to agree on a savior or an agenda, but they are going to create problems for politicians they see as beholden to a fat-cat establishment. They are the blue-collar workers who will not just ignore Walter Mondale's endorsements by Big Labor, but actively resent them.

They are also a potential source of sustenance to politicians who do not share Richard Viguerie's right-wing views. Viguerie himself cites Texas Governor Mark White and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, moderate Democrats elected in 1982 by harnessing populist impulses. The lesson of their victories, though Viguerie seems to miss it, is that populism does not have to be the exclusive franchise of Richard Viguerie's band of wildcat reactionaries. ■

The Basic Primer on 1984's Top Topic



The House and Senate Agree:

"A serious briefing for those concerned with today's most challenging issue"
Pete Domenici, R-N.M.
Chairman, Senate Budget Cmte.

"A timely and incisive synopsis"
Jim Jones, D-Okla.
Chairman, House Budget Cmte.

At selected bookstores or by prepayments:

$6.95 plus $2.00 handling

The Urban Institute Press
P.O. Box 19958-CDP
Hampden Station
Baltimore, Maryland 21211

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

America's Hidden Success. John E. Schwarz. *W. W. Norton, $12.95.* This provocative book convincingly punctures much of the conventional wisdom that has emerged in recent years about the performance of the American economy. Relying on statistical information usually overlooked by both Reagan and his critics, Schwarz, a professor of political science at the University of Arizona, demonstrates how the 1970s were actually a decade of extraordinary achievements.

Real (after inflation) income per individual rose twice as much in the seventies as in the decade the Republicans so often portray as some kind of Golden Era: Eisenhower's 1950s. From 1960 to 1980 the American economy produced 30 million new jobs, an unprecedented achievement that addressed a challenge other industrialized nations avoided: how to provide for the large number of "baby boom" children who began entering the job market in the early 1960s. Schwarz also shows that the share of national income consumed by government remained virtually constant during this period, but that government expenditures were used to great effect in reducing poverty and cleaning up the environment.

Schwarz doesn't mean to apologize for the economy's shortcomings or belittle such economic disasters as two OPEC oil shocks, though he is too sanguine about the innocuousness of such things as large federal budget deficits. His argument also would have been even stronger if he'd been willing to debunk a few more liberal bugaboos.

Still, in restoring some badly needed perspective, the book performs two important functions. First, it reveals as fallacious the underlying premise of Reaganomics: that government is responsible for strangling economic growth. Second, it suggests that Americans not only need to stop feeling sorry for themselves, but should look to government as a major player in restoring the economy's health.

—Phillip Keisling

Closing the Gold Window: Domestic Politics and the End of Bretton Woods. Joanne Gowa. *Cornell University Press, $12.95.* Buried under a mountain of turgid prose and academic jargon is the fascinating saga of President Nixon's 1971 decision to devalue the dollar. Nixon, whose best-known comment about international finance is, "I don't give a [expletive deleted] about the lira," also once complained to his economic advisers, "I hear all about the balance of payments and nobody worries about 8 percent unemployment."

Nixon worried, and to make sure that unemployment would continue to decline—especially in the months before the 1972 election—he devalued the dollar, thereby boosting U.S. exports and slowing the flood of imports.

In deciding to devalue the dollar, Nixon overruled Paul Volcker, then a high-ranking Treasury Department official. Today the U.S. is also facing a balance of payments deficit plus 8 percent unemployment, and once again Volcker is arguing against devaluing the dollar. This time, however, Volcker will probably prevail, with the all-too-predictable consequence that employment and exports will continue to stagnate. In the author's opinion, Volcker's conservative approach to both domestic and international finance is typical of the banker syndrome: a penchant "to foresee disaster but prefer inaction."

—Alfred J. Watkins

Dark Horse. Steve Neal. *Doubleday, $17.95.* The absorbing centerpiece of this biography of Wendell Willkie is the story of the 1940 election, in which Willkie dramatically emerged from political nowhere to overtake his rivals for the Republican nomination and ended up giving FDR the scare of his electoral life. The author has heartening news for those Democratic candidates who are not doing very well in the polls: six weeks before Willkie was nominated by the Republican convention, Dr. Gallup gave him a rating of exactly 3 percent.

—Charles Peters

Good Times, Bad Times. Harold Evans. *Atheneum, $17.95.* This engagingly sardonic, if often self-serving work is really two books: the first is an account of Evans's 14 successful years editing *The Sunday Times* of London, where he published pathbreaking stories on Kim Philby and the thalidomide cases; the second explains what happened after Rupert Murdoch bought *The Sunday Times* and the daily *Times* (two entirely separate papers) in 1981, appointed Evans editor of the latter, and fired him a year later.

In the first part, Evans includes a fascinating account of *The Sunday Times*'s 1975 struggle with the government over publication of the Crossman diaries. Richard Crossman, a Labor cabinet member in the 1960s, had chronicled the day-to-day inner workings of the British government, a major conclusion being that unaccountable civil servants, not cabinet officials, controlled power. He wanted the diaries published after his death, and Evans was lucky enough to have a libel lawyer who, unlike many, was interested in telling his client what conceivably *could* be published, instead of what could not. The paper won.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ironically, as Britain, in the wake of that case, moves toward greater rights of disclosure for former government officials, this country is moving in the opposite direction. The same "confidence" requirements waived by the British court in the Crossman case were strengthened in the U.S. in 1979 in the Frank Snepp case, and are being tightened further under Reagan.

The second part is a more directly cautionary tale. The imagery Evans uses to depict Murdoch in London evokes that of Hitler in the Sudetenland: appeasement, a "putsch," brutal henchmen, broken promises, the big lie, and pledges of editorial independence that are—in Murdoch's own words—"not worth the paper they're written on."

Evans moves easily from playing Chamberlain to Churchill without ever really admitting he was duped when he accepted the editorship under Murdoch, allowing only that his mistake had been "I put the paper first and [didn't] protect my back." This rings about as true as the assurances of selflessness in another set of memoirs, which Evans edited—Henry Kissinger's.

But his indictment is persuasive nonetheless. While Murdoch doesn't put cheesecake and "Headless Body" and "Topless Bar" headlines in all his papers, he also won't keep his mitts off. Poor Colonel McCormack. With Murdoch's purchase of the Chicago *Sun-Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* is now that city's liberal paper.

—*Jonathan Alter*

The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade. Harvey Klehr. *Basic Books, $26.50.* There's a lesson for rigid ideologues on both sides of the political spectrum in Klehr's exhaustive survey of the American Communist party in the 1930s. By ignoring practical solutions and following the Moscow party line, the party alienated potential supporters. Sympathetic intellectuals like Edmund Wilson and John Dos Passos were called, among other things, "journalistic cooties"; members of the American Federation of Labor were branded "social-fascists"; and Roosevelt's New Deal was nothing more than "developed fascism." Membership rose initially, but the mud-slinging and subservience to Moscow ensured only a short-lived success. By 1938, membership had dropped in half to 50,000.

—*James Gibney*

In Banks We Trust: Bankers and Their Close Associates: the CIA, the Mafia, Drug-traders, Dictators, Politicians, and the Vatican. Penny Lernoux. *Anchor Press, $16.95.* This is an uneven book that draws too frequently from magazine and newspaper clips. Lernoux finds banker perfidy everywhere—from Australia to Southeast Asia to the Vatican. What she doesn't find is a clear focus for her unsettling tales of drug traffickers, CIA agents, right-wing mercenaries, and con men in three-piece suits. Perhaps Lernoux, the talented reporter on Latin America for the *Nation*, should have stuck to the relationship between big banks and Latin America, because this section of the book is the most compelling.

—*Ronald Brownstein*

The Reconstruction of Patriotism. Morris Janowitz. *University of Chicago Press, $22.50.* This brilliant book will probably be overlooked by most people, not just for its rather old-fashioned title but for the author's dense writing style. It's a pity. Janowitz, a sociologist at the University of Chicago who is well-known for his works on military culture, addresses a seminal issue: how to restore the sense of shared civic responsibilty that has fallen victim in recent years to our growing preoccupation with individual rights and the rise of special-interest groups.

Among Janowitz's remedies are a total revamping of social studies curricula in our schools and a redirection of most efforts at bilingual education. But central to his prescription is the revival of the concept of the citizen soldier, whose importance since pre-Revolutionary War days Janowitz discusses at length. He concludes, "There can be no reconstruction of patriotism without a system of national service."

Familiar as the themes may be to some *Monthly* readers, this is an important book. I highly recommend it.

—*P.K.*

Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error. Mark Green, Gail MacColl, eds. *Pantheon, $4.95.* In the world according to Reagan, Italian fascism inspired the New Deal, Karl Marx designed the progressive tax system, and Trident missiles can be recalled after they are launched. Once, Reagan even claimed that any criminal found with a gun in England was tried for first-degree murder and hanged if found guilty. Not true, but, as Larry Speakes said, "It's a good story, though."

The trouble is, nobody notices anymore whether the stories are true or not. Blunders that Reagan made during the early days of his administration used to be front-page news to *The Washington Post*. Today they're relegated to the bottom of Lou Cannon's once-a-week column, if they're printed at all. This book provides a needed reminder of how bad—and how frequent—those misstatements and distortions can be.

—*Kurt Eichenwald*

Oswald's Game. Jean Davison. *Norton, $17.95.* Davison knits the two predominant JFK assassination theories—conspiracy vs. lone assassin—together into a loose, yet fairly plausible, weave: The CIA was plotting to kill Castro, who knew it, and said so in an interview that appeared in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. Along came Lee Harvey Oswald, a Castro fanatic, resident of New Orleans, and avid reader of the *Times-Picayune*. Oswald appointed himself Castro's protector and preeempted the assassination of the Cuban leader by killing Kennedy. Then the CIA and Castro confused the bungling Warren Commission by covering up their activities leading up to—and denying foreknowledge of—the assassination.

—*Emily Lazar*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Perspectives on the issues

Making Washington Work for You
August Bequai
The author details the route to obtaining information quickly and cheaply, having a voice in the decision-making process, employing the FOIA, handling regulatory agencies' investigations, and using the Washington Press. For individuals, small organizations and businesses, and lawyers.
304pp. ISBN 0-669-06347-9 $22.50
Also available in paper: ISBN 0-669-06348-7 $12.00

Strategy and the Defense Dilemma
Nuclear Policies and Alliance Politics
Gerald Garvey, Princeton University
In this book the author calls for loosening the NATO ties, looking more toward the Asian rimland. He advocates radical changes in the composition of U.S. military strategy as a means of averting nuclear holocaust, preventing costly escalation, and protecting U.S. interests.
160pp. ISBN 0-669-07508-6 $24.50

Small Nuclear Forces and U.S. Security Policy
Threats and Potential Conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia
edited by **Rodney W. Jones**, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University
Focusing on the Middle East and South Asia, the book offers a technical assessment of what arms are available and a forecast of the impact of small nuclear forces in these regions on the countries themselves and on U.S. defense policy.
304pp. ISBN 0-669-06736-9 $25.50

Defending a Free Society
edited by **Robert W. Poole, Jr.**
A Reason Foundation Book
Distinguished contributors explain the basic principles of individual rights and limited government as a framework for addressing major issues in defense policy.
384pp. ISBN 0-669-07240-0 $20.00

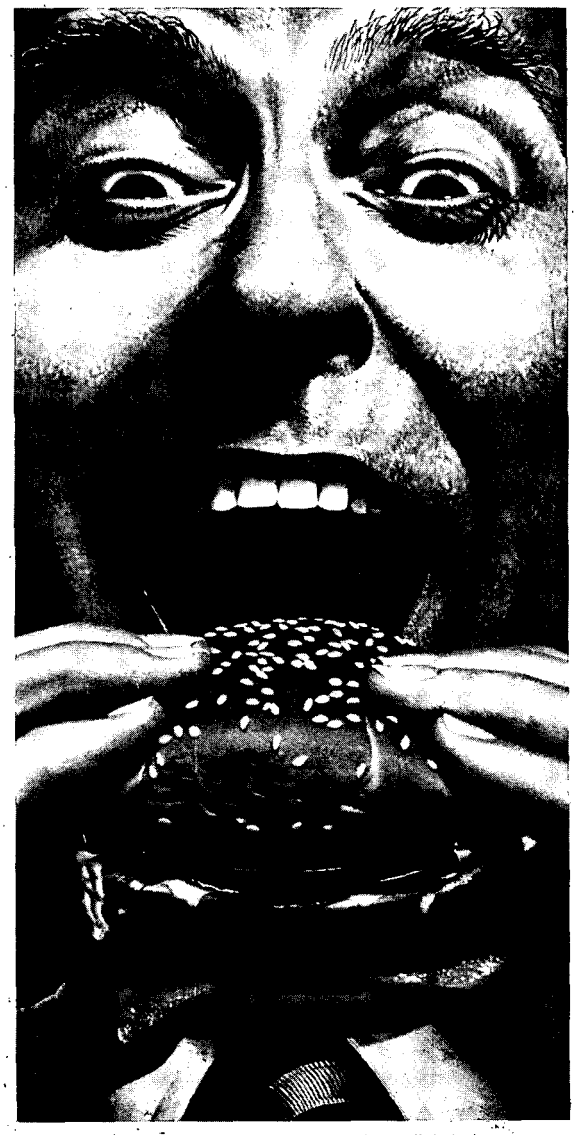
Conflicting Interests
Corporate-Governance Controversies
Fred D. Baldwin
This book analyzes a series of controversial issues, paying particular attention to proposals to hold large, privately owned business corporations accountable to nonstockholder constituencies for their social and political performance.
224pp. ISBN 0-669-07123-4 $23.00

HEATH
LexingtonBooks
D.C. Heath and Company
125 Spring Street
Lexington, MA 02173
(617) 862-6650 (212) 924-6460
Call our toll-free numbers
(800) 428-8071 or (800) 33-HEATH

from Lexington Books

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Can American business survive on a diet of instant gratification?



Computers spew out production reports and sales figures hourly. And managers eat them up.

Investors hunger for bigger dividends and faster earnings growth.

The nightly news feeds us today's hot economic story complete with all the freshest buzzwords.

No matter what the economy, much of American business continues to feast on short-term results. Expecting profits to be served up like fast-food burgers. And economic solutions dished out like instant pudding.

To satisfy this appetite for short-term rewards, managers find it tempting to reduce investments for the future. Investments in new plant and equipment; in research and development.

We're W.R.Grace & Co. We've been doing business in all parts of the world, in all kinds of economies for 130 years. Short-term thinking has never been our way of doing business.

In the last 40 years, we've followed a strategy that has allowed us to diversify into growth industries. It's been a transition that has taken Grace from being primarily a Latin American trading and shipping concern to a company with worldwide interests in chemicals, natural resources and specialized consumer services. A company with more than $6 billion in sales.

All that didn't just happen. It was planned that way—by people dedicated to the long-term point of view.

We've always believed in giving the future its fair share of today's resources. Last year at Grace, investment in new plant and equipment was almost 5 times what it was 10 years ago. Research and development expenditures were nearly 3 times what they were a decade ago.

Right now we believe all of us must work to correct a fundamental flaw in the way American business is operating. Short-term results cannot be allowed to become our only criterion for success. Investors must be willing to relax some of the pressure on managers to produce immediate results. Managers must be given more security to make long-term investment decisions.

In turn, those in management must be prepared to make long-term commitments to invest in innovation—in new products and new technologies. And at the same time, to make long-range plans to restore our older industries to full strength.

American business cannot allow itself to overindulge in short-term rewards. Long-lasting results will take time to develop. But that's what makes them so gratifying.

GRACE

One step ahead of a changing world.

W.R. Grace & Co., 1114 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED